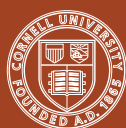




SOUTHEAST ASIA PROGRAM

AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY

FALL BULLETIN 2007



Cornell University

DIGNIFIED IN LIFE AND LEGACY

DAVID K. WYATT

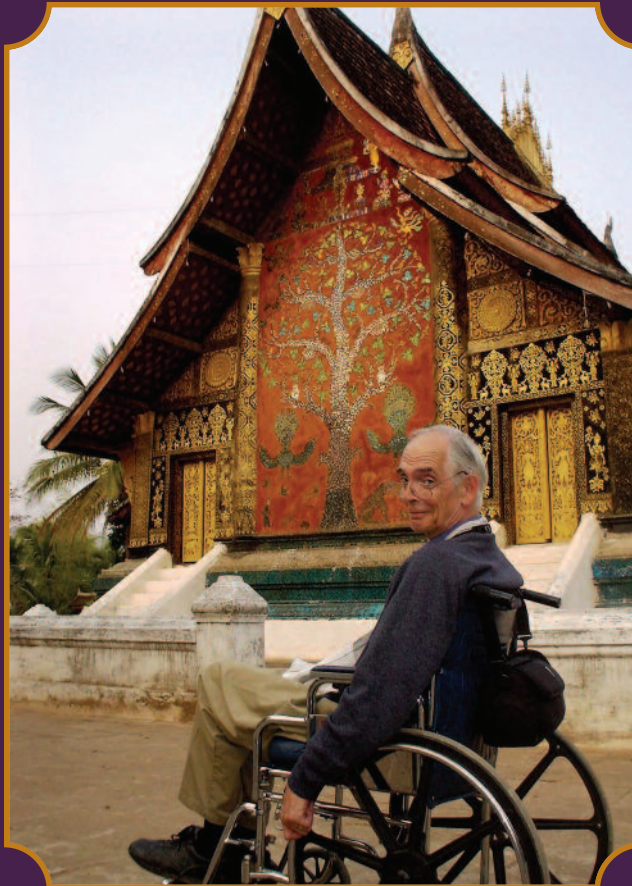


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DEAR FRIENDS,

Perhaps you have been wondering why you have not received your SEAP Bulletin this past year. No, it is not because the U.S. Postal Service pulled out of “centrally isolated” Ithaca and left our mail stranded downtown. But it was because both our editor and outreach coordinator left us to take new positions elsewhere.

We have now filled this position with Thamora Fishel who may be familiar to some of you. Thamora is a SEAP alumna (anthropology PhD '01) who has decided to return to live in Ithaca after a teaching career in California. Thamora has done extensive research in Thailand and is very familiar with Southeast Asia. We are sure that under her leadership, our outreach efforts will remain strong and dynamic. Thamora is also the new editor of this Bulletin. We have decided to make an effort to make the Bulletin a more intellectually stimulating publication now that basic information about SEAP activities is readily available on our website. The Bulletin will continue to have an annual print edition, while electronic Bulletin supplements will soon be available each semester, alongside the current archive of past bulletins, to provide expanded and up-to-date coverage of SEAP news and activities. Some of these changes will begin with this issue. I am sure that Thamora welcomes your comments.

Many of you probably know that Professor David Wyatt passed away on November 14, 2006. Not only were services held in Ithaca, but a memorial Buddhist *sanghadana* was held at Wat Makut Kasatriyaram in Bangkok where many of Acharn Wyatt's students, colleagues, and friends were present. Also that same day, a memorial seminar was held at the Thai National Archives sponsored by the Association of Thai Archives, the National Archives Office, and the Historical Society under the royal patronage of H.R.H. Crown Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. Acharn Wyatt was a favorite of Somdet Phra Thep who would make time to attend lectures given by Professor Wyatt when he was in Thailand. A David Wyatt fund was also established to promote the study of Siamese history and archives. These high honors were befitting for Acharn Wyatt, a beloved and respected historian of Thailand. You can read about Professor Wyatt's contribution to our knowledge of Thai history in Tamara Loos's article in this Bulletin.

Professor James Siegel also retired from full-time teaching this past spring semester. He is the last of the second generation SEAP faculty to retire. And like other emeritus SEAP faculty, he retains an office at the Kahin Center and is available to help mentor future scholars of Southeast Asia. Jim will join the ranks of Stan O'Connor, Ben Anderson, John Wolff, and Audrey Kahin who maintain offices at the Kahin Center.

To honor the work of our pioneering faculty, exemplified by the contributions of Professor George Kahin to the field of Southeast Asian studies, SEAP led a campaign to establish a second Southeast Asia book prize in the Association for Asian Studies. We received the support of the association's Southeast Asia Council (SEAC) to fundraise for the Kahin Book prize which will complement the existing Benda prize. The Benda prize is awarded for the best “first” book on Southeast Asia written by a young scholar; the Kahin prize, on the other hand, will be awarded for the best “second and beyond” book on Southeast Asia. Although we have reached our fundraising goal to endow the prize through contributions from the Kahin family, George's

former students, SEAC, and SEAP, some of you may want to add to this endowment to honor George Kahin and/or your SEAP professors. Please get in touch with me if you would like to contribute to the Kahin prize endowment. We hope to be able to announce the inauguration of the Kahin prize at the next AAS meeting in Atlanta.

SEAP continues to promote Southeast Asian studies by organizing lectures, talks, gamelan concerts, and conferences on campus (and off campus through our outreach office). The Brown Bag Lecture series first organized in the early 1960s is one of the oldest series on campus. Although the audience no longer has to bring their own bag lunch (pizza, soda, coffee, and cookies are now provided gratis) the series remains vibrant under the leadership of our graduate student committee. SEAP students help shape the future of the field by networking with selected speakers for the BB lectures and participants of the annual graduate student conference, now entering its 10th year. SEAP also organized a mini-symposium on critical Thai political issues in March 2007 where Paul Handley spoke about the monarchy, Kevin Hewison discussed issues of democratic reforms, and Duncan McCargo gave us his views on the crisis in Southern Thailand. The symposium drew a large audience including many Thais from nearby cities and states. In September of this year, SEAP will cosponsor an international colloquium (with the Cornell Institute of European Studies) enti-



For up-to-date coverage of SEAP news and activities, go to:
<http://einaudi.cornell.edu/southeastasia/outreach/bulletins.asp>

led “Imagining Muslims/Imagining Others: South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Europe.”

I want personally to thank Professor Martin Hatch for his dedication and foresight, not just for establishing and maintaining Cornell's outstanding gamelan ensemble, but for convincing his department to create an endowment for a regular visiting artist from Southeast Asia to come teach at Cornell. Marty has taught and trained innumerable gamelan players over the years. He and his students still perform regularly on the quad (when the weather is nice) and in Barnes Hall. This coming October, as a result of his efforts, the Cornell Faculty Committee on Music will be presenting, as a part of the Cornell Concert Series, the 25 member Gamelan Cudamani music and dance company from Indonesia to give a music and dance performance at the newly refurbished Bailey Hall.

In ending, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues, students, staff, and the wider SEAP community for their support and friendship over the years I have had the honor to serve as director. In a way, I am relieved that this letter to you will be my last as director. What started as a two year stint in 1998 has stretched into far too many years. It is time for a younger and more energetic colleague to assume the leadership of SEAP. I look forward to moving out of Uris at the end of this academic year, and to become eligible (soon) to claim a coveted office at the Kahin Center.

Sawasdee and best wishes,
 Thak Chaloemtiarana

Thak Chaloemtiarana



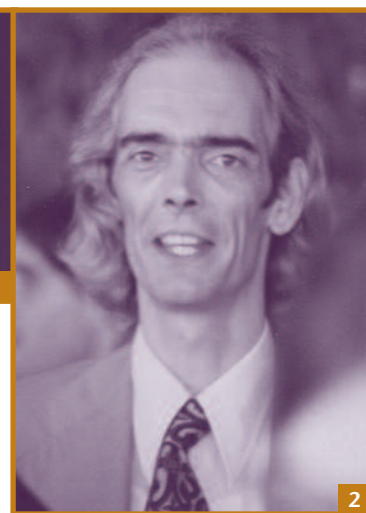
In Celebration of PROFESSOR DAVID KENT WYATT (1937-2006)

Tamara Loos | Associate Professor of history and Southeast Asian studies

Where do you begin to describe the full life of Professor David K. Wyatt? In Fitchburg, Massachusetts on 21 September 1937 when Ken and Becky Wyatt welcomed into the world their first born, David Kent? Or sixty-nine years later, when on 14 November 2006 Professor Wyatt died peacefully under the devoted care of his beloved wife, Alene, in Ithaca, New York? Tidy bookend dates marking birth and death might seem an apt way to begin an account of the life of an historian, but they cannot capture David's exuberant engagement with existence in between. Dates tell us nothing about his childhood in Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, Iowa racing around town with four siblings and "blasting" out hymns in the local Episcopal church, where he first exercised vocal cords that went on to star in many Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Nor do they shed light on his joint romance with knowledge *and* an intriguing student at Radcliffe named Alene Wilson that David combined in 1959 when he graduated with an A.B. in philosophy from Harvard College and married Alene, who became his life-long beloved. Nor, finally, do the years 1937 and 2006 capture the experiences accumulated at home and abroad with Alene and their three sons, Douglas, Andrew and James, in Thailand, Malaysia, London, Ann Arbor and Ithaca (which felt as foreign and frosty as Antarctica to David), even though each place fed his scholarship, sense of humor, and seemingly unfaltering optimism. This optimism is frequently mentioned in the heartfelt eruption of sentiments about David expressed by loved ones, friends, colleagues, former students, and even strangers whose lives he touched.¹ Repeated terms peppering these missives about David read like keystones underpinning the monument that was his life and career: indefatigable, infectious, enthusiastic, passionately bibliophilic, unpretentious, witty, inspirational, resilient and dignified.



INDEFATIGABLE is a word that applies to all aspects of David's life but no where more than in his scholarship. David penned his first article in 1963, while still a graduate student of Southeast Asian history at Cornell University and young father of his first son. His last book, intriguingly entitled *Manuscripts, Books, and Secrets* will be published posthumously in 2008. Within those forty-odd years, David authored more than one hundred items, including eighteen single-authored or translated books, over seventy articles, six introductions to historical reprints, and several bibliographies. It takes an afternoon just to read through his publications list. His prolific yet sound scholarship has defined the study of Siam and Thailand throughout the English-speaking world, and has given shape to the field of Thai history. His *Short History of Thailand*, now in its second edition, has been in print since 1984, and is considered by many to be the standard English language text on the history of Thailand. This publication along with David's contributions to two textbooks on Southeast Asia, *In Search of*

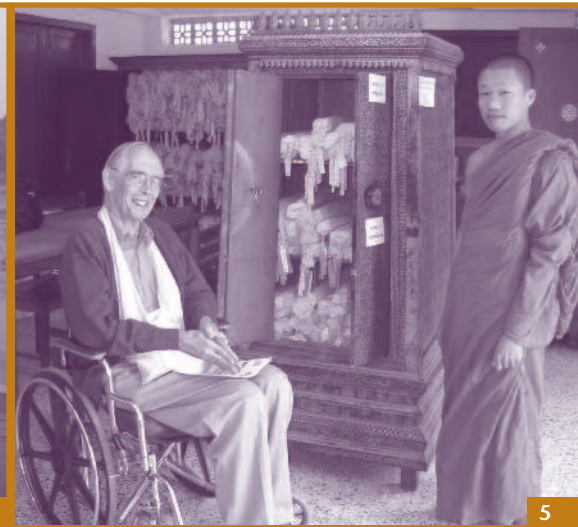
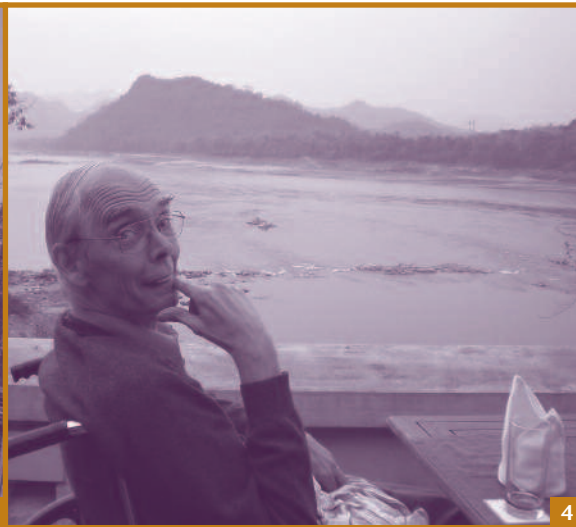


Southeast Asia and its successor, *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, have established him as one of the preeminent historians of Thailand.

INFECTIOUSLY ENTHUSIASTIC came up most often in descriptions by David's colleagues and former students about his absolute devotion to translations of original sources in a number of languages including, of course, central Thai, but also northern Thai, Malay (with A. Teeuw), Cham and others. Anyone who worked with David has witnessed his infectious enthusiasm for ancient texts, dynastic chronicles, manuscripts, and their translation. Line by line, word by word, he delighted in the multiple interpretations possible in these grammatically complex and context-blind (to modernists, at least) sources. David executed the laborious process of translation of texts that existed centuries before the first dictionaries and which many scholars find too daunting or time consuming a task. By so doing, he opened up entire worlds of the past to many who could not understand the original "ancient" language, even if they were fluent in the modern version of it. Moreover, these translations were of sources that emerged from across the landscape of mainland Southeast Asia: southern, central and north-

Vliet. David was a member of a generation that is increasingly rare: a generalist who could write and teach equally about all periods of Thai history.

PASSIONATELY BIBLIOPHILIC tempers what could more accurately be described as David's obsession with books and sources, especially rare documents about Southeast Asia in local languages. He was committed through and through to the search for, collection of, and preservation of source material. Arguably, fully half of his publications are bibliographies, translations of primary sources, edited versions of original documents, checklists of Thai language serials, maps, and other foundational works in English and Thai that help make a field of study, like Thai history, possible. David led the effort to computerize the Bibliography of Asian Studies, a project which consumed his meticulous mind for years. It makes sense, then, that curators, librarians, and fellow bibliophiles are among his greatest admirers. One former curator of the Echols collection at Cornell—a collection that David treasured so much that he came out of retirement in 2004-2005 to temporarily curate—described David as perfectly suited to wear John M. Echols' mantle because of David's vigilant nurturance of the collection. Before he accepted the curatorship, David served for



ern Thailand, Cambodia, and Malaya to name a few. His works consider stone monoliths from the Sukhothai period as well as an analysis of late twentieth century Thailand. And the breadth of his vision of history was not just geographic and chronological, but also catholic in terms of sources. Stepping outside the archives, David enlisted in his vision of Thai history temple murals, chronicles, literature and maps. He mastered the technicalities of computerized map-making and generously created made-to-order historical maps for students and colleagues. He also strongly supported the re-issuing of foreign accounts about Thailand by writing critical introductions to narratives of the most significant diplomatic missions to that country by Bowring, Burney, Crawford, Finlayson, de la Loubere, and Van

nearly a decade as a faculty representative to the Library Board, chaired CORMOSEA (Committee on Research Materials on Southeast Asia) for the Association for Asian Studies in the mid-1980s, and served on committees of students working on Southeast Asian research materials in library science. His passion for materials about Southeast Asia and related zeal for the Friends of the Library book sale is best demonstrated by a visit to Ohio University's Alden library, which now houses over 15,000 volumes of Thai and English language material from David's private library collection.²

His love for books and sources found a natural ally in Trasvin Jittidecharak, a fellow bibliophile and founder and publisher of Silkworm Books and the Mekong Press in Thailand. In the midst

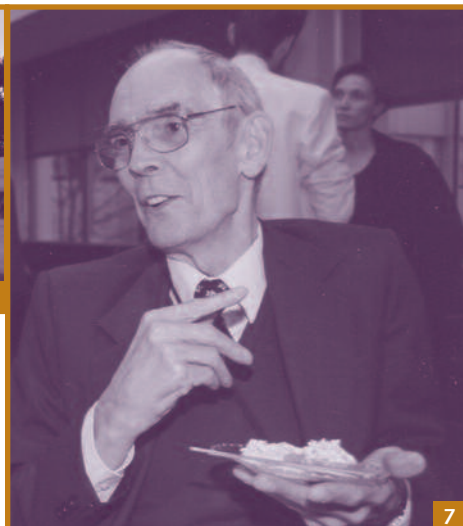
of renewed violence between Bangkok and Thailand's southernmost provinces, David and Trasvin reissued in Thai *The History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani* by Ibrahim Syukri, a pseudonymous author who wrote a highly critical account of the history of relations between Bangkok and the south. The book, originally written in Jawi, had been partially banned in Thailand, but Trasvin persevered to have the entire text published in Thai. She said that David wanted to ensure that Thais had access to different points of view.

UNPRETENTIOUS. David's peers recognized his commitment to Thailand and his contributions to the field when they selected him as the President of the Association for Asian Studies from 1993 to 1994. In 1994, he was named the John Stambaugh Professor of History at Cornell, where David taught from 1969 until he retired in 2002. The respect felt for him by the Cornell community garnered him the positions of Director of the Southeast Asia Program from 1976 to 1979 and Chairperson of the History Department from 1983 to 1987. Grants awarded to David included, among others, a Senior Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities (1974-75), an American council of Learned Societies grant (1977), a John S.

than have them slavishly imitate their teacher. The result was that some even went against his works. But he respected this academic freedom..." His former students flooded Alene's email box with letters describing the privilege of working with David not simply because of his deep knowledge of Southeast Asian history, but because of the ways in which David behaved, thought and lived as a scholar, teacher and mentor. Despite David's stature in the field and demands on his time, he was approachable, patient, encouraging, supportive and non-judgmental. He provided gentle, feather-light yet sound mentorship. His guidance was, much like him, understated but quietly present. David gave his students space to explore and find their own intellectual voices. One former student credited "his guidance, his support, his teaching, his friendship and his humanity" for her current academic success. Others found his passion for ancient texts contagious. Even diehard modernists found earlier periods absolutely absorbing under David's guidance in his course on pre-modern Southeast Asia (which was exceptionally well-attended), in which students deconstructed steles, chronicles, art, architecture, and some of the earliest military maps from the region.



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8

Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (1983), and a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship (1992). He was sought after as a member of numerous committees (Benda Prize, The Asia Society, Cornell Savoyards, SSRC-ACLS, etc.) and societies (such as The Siam Society). David also served on the committees of countless graduate students who today hold positions at universities around the world. And yet, despite his prodigious productivity and recognition in Thailand and abroad, David remained humble, approachable and without pretense.

This is especially true of his relations with students. Professor Sunait Chutintaranond, now professor of history at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, explained that David "preferred to stimulate [his students'] native creativity rather

David's support exceeded the space of the classroom. In their home, David and Alene rounded up what he affectionately called "waifs and strays"—typically his graduate students whose own families lived far away—for Thanksgiving dinner every year. They'd feast on Alene's delicious courses and sometimes David's specialty: spring rolls. One of these graduate students, Chiranan Pitpreecha, lived with the Wyatt's for a year while she worked on her Ph.D. and was considered part of their extended family. She reminisces about the serious scholarly exchanges she and David had amidst silly discussions of obscure words he jokingly thought best described himself, such as "curmudgeon" and "old codger." She was among many who considered him a father figure as well as a role model.

WITTY. David's wit has been described as sly and gleefully wicked. My fondest memories on this score are associated with the sounds of whrrrr! beep-beep! as David raced down the Arts quad path in a motorized scooter with his wily grin appearing behind a wafting palm-frond wave of those curiously round fingertips. As often as not, he would offer me a lift and announce his usual weather forecast of 90% chance of snow, even if we were experiencing record summer heat. Puns were another favorite of his—corny and infectious. Others remember David's insertion of jokes, especially those with some historic validity, into his lectures offhandedly mentioning, for example, Marco Polo smuggling spaghetti from China. He loved certain deft phrases such as one description of the “snarling pit of Shan states” that lingered in one's mind long after the name of the author who originated them because of David's snappy delivery. He infused his teaching with an absorbing combination of erudition and entertainment. He could transform the blank faces of undergraduates in his “Asian Civilizations” course by bursting into song about ancient India written to the tune of a Gilbert & Sullivan melody.

EXUBERANT in his performances, David derived great pleasure from a long career on stage, whether before amused under-

and nearly lost his life in 1999 to a mysterious bacteria picked up on his travels to Southeast Asia. David integrated his newfound “abilities” (not disabilities) with humor, grace, and dignity. Astoundingly, his scholarly productivity seemed only to increase after he emerged from those dark days in the hospital. He returned to Cornell to teach for several more years and traveled to Chiang Mai and elsewhere in Thailand with frequency. Alene's rock-solid support made this travel and productivity possible throughout David's life, but her strength became legendary after he became less mobile. The affection felt for David by his colleagues, fellow Savoyards, friends, and former students applied equally to Alene, who was a partner to him in the fullest sense. Alene, who grew up and went to school in South Asia, was a critical part of David's journey of discovery from the moment he met her. She is credited with stimulating his initial interest in Asia. Sitting across from him in his office in Cornell, I was surely not the only one who noticed how David's eyes lit up when they flitted across the photo he kept of Alene on his desk. Theirs was a relationship of mutual respect. And it was by her side that David passed away from emphysema and congestive heart failure on the snow-free morning of November 14, 2006. ☺



DIGNIFIED in life and legacy... David K. Wyatt

graduates at Cornell or enthralled audiences watching David perform with the Cornell Savoyards, a Gilbert & Sullivan group. He sang in leading roles and chorus parts with equal delight in countless Gilbert & Sullivan operettas. These roles included most memorably that of Cervantes/Don Quixote in the 1983 Ithaca Players production of *Man of La Mancha* and his performance in the Mikado. For many, and not just G&S aficionados, David will always be Don Quixote. Prolific researcher and writer, bibliophile, mentor, teacher, and family man: one wonders where David found the time to commit to rehearsing and performing with such verve and presence, but he happily did.

RESILIENCE in the face of illness describes David's approach to his health. He was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1995

PHOTO CAPTIONS FOR PAGES 4-7

- 1 David Wyatt performing as Don Quixote in 1983
- 2 Wyatt in 1978
- 3 Wyatt and his junior colleagues Tamara Loos and Eric Tagliacozzo in 2005
- 4 On the banks of the Mekong river in 2004
- 5 Viewing manuscripts at Wat Mai
- 6 In front of Wat Arun in Bangkok
- 7 At a SEAP reception
- 8 David and Alene Wyatt on their 45th wedding anniversary
- 9 In animated conversation at a SEAP reception

REFERENCES

- ¹ The following composite of David's life was created from emails sent to Alene Wyatt from Patton Adams, John Badgley, Tracy Barrett, Bonnie Brereton, Charnvit Kasetsiri, Chiranan Pitpreecha, Pamela Clearwater, Sopha Chanamool Cole, Carol Compton, Dhiravat na Pombejra, Olga Dror, Maggie Edwards, Jeffrey Ferrier, Louis Gabaude, Alan Feinstein, Nancy Florida, Jennifer Foley, Christoph Giebel, Volker Grabowsky, Paul Gries, Tyrell Haberkorn, Caroline Hanna, William B. Hausner, Albert Hoffstädt, Rey Ilito, Susan Kepner, Biff and Jane Keyes, Vic Koschmann, Katie Kristof, Jane Marie and Adam Law, Micheline Lessard, Victor Lieberman, Justin McDaniel, Mike Montesano, Nancy Munkenbeck, Gavin Ng, Sister Minh Nguyen, Jim Ockey, Norman Owen, Susan Kuniholm Potter, Merle Rickles, Eric Rubin, Rujaya Abhakron, Rachel Safman, Jeffrey Shane, Virginia Shih, Teresa Sobieszczyk, Carol and Bob Stratton, Sunait Chutintaranond, Bob Taylor, Nora Taylor, Baas Terweil, Thongchai Winichakul, Trasvin Jittidecharak and Piyada Suwanrath, Will Tuchrello, Andrew Turton, Nan Hastings Zatzman, and others.
- ² David first made sure that the Echols collection already had a copy of these volumes.
- ³ “The Pathfinder,” *The Nation* (Bangkok), Sunday Style section, 26 Nov. 2006.

GROWTH AND CRISIS:

Cornell Southeast Asia Program's First Two Decades

Audrey Kahin | Independent Scholar



As Cornell's Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) focuses on a region of the world that was among the most volatile in the decades following World War II, it was inevitably caught up in many of the conflicts over foreign policy that raged among American academics and policy makers during that period. The Program was founded in the early years of the Cold War, when American interest centered not only on the Soviet Union but also on the perceived threat of the new Communist government in China and the fear that communism would spread southwards to the former colonial countries of Southeast Asia. During and after the Korean War, the role of communism in East and Southeast Asia loomed large in academic and political debate in the United States, exacerbated in the early 1950s by the witch-hunts Senator Joseph McCarthy conducted against scholars and government officials specializing on Asia. In the 1960s, Washington's focus on the region became even more intense as the United States became directly and massively involved, both politically and militarily, in the countries of Indochina.

The importance of East and Southeast Asia to American postwar foreign policy had an impact on the character of SEAP during its early years. Southeast Asia was essentially a new field of study for American scholars, and with the dearth of specialists on the area, the Program constituted a storehouse of knowledge for academics and policy makers alike and provided a bridge between the United States and the countries of the region. Its function was relatively uncontroversial during the 1950s, when the American government was eager to increase its knowledge of the newly independent countries of Southeast Asia with which it now had to interact directly.

Only in the late 1930s was the term Southeast Asia used to describe Siam (Thailand) and the collection of disparate European colonies that stretched between China and India. The rapid Japanese conquest of most of the area in early 1942 created

a situation where it made sense for Allied forces in the Asian theater to establish a Southeast Asia Command that encompassed these varying countries. In the closing years of the war the Japanese armed and trained "native militaries" in the countries they now occupied to assist them in resisting attacks from returning Allied forces. These indigenous militias helped prevent the old colonial powers from restoring their rule in several Southeast Asian countries, opening the way for the outbreak of armed revolutions and Communist insurgencies such as occurred nowhere else in the former colonial world. These added to American concerns about the region.

Up till at least 1950, with the exception of Thailand, nearly all the information the State Department received on Southeast Asian countries had first been channeled through the foreign offices of their European metropolises, and Washington was well aware that it lacked independent knowledge on these newly emerging states. During the early years of the Southeast Asia Program the State Department frequently sent Foreign Service officers to Cornell to learn the languages and begin to understand something of the history, culture and politics of the Southeast Asian countries to which they were being posted. At the same time, some Cornell scholars had close ties with leading Southeast Asian political or academic figures. This was especially the case with George Kahin, who came to Cornell in 1951, after conducting his doctoral research on the anti-colonial revolution in Indonesia where he had met and established friendships with many of the leading nationalists, from President Sukarno down. But it was also true in other Southeast Asian countries, where few American scholars were carrying out research and the Program's graduate students frequently were the first scholars to establish ties between academic institutions in these countries and those in the United States.

In subsequent decades the State Department continued to send Foreign Service officers to Cornell for training, but in many



ways the Program's role changed as it emerged as a fulcrum of dissent and controversy during the 1960s.

As the 1950s drew to a close, the political situation in many of the Southeast Asian countries had already begun to deteriorate. In Thailand the dictatorship of Sarit Thanarat was established in 1958, the post-colonial governments in Indonesia, Burma, Laos, and Cambodia were becoming more authoritarian, and Communist movements were gaining strength in much of the region. In the years after the 1954 Geneva Conference, the United States government had been trying to reverse what it saw as a minatory trend by establishing the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and initiating efforts in Vietnam to prevent the country's unification under a Communist government. American involvement in the area intensified after 1963 when US military forces intervened directly in Vietnam, with spill-over effects in many of the mainland Southeast Asian countries, especially Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. In addition, in 1965, Indonesia, the largest country in the area, was wracked by violence as the government of President Sukarno was overthrown and replaced by the military regime of General Suharto.

SEAP was drawn into the controversies surrounding these events in both mainland and island Southeast Asia. As the United States became more directly involved in Vietnam, Southeast Asia specialists were in demand by the US government and also by those who opposed the war. Inevitably members of the Program, professors and students alike, became identified with both sides of the political and scholarly debate. And in Indonesia, an interpretation by three of the Program's best scholars on the so-called "coup" of October 1, 1965, which triggered the events that eventually led to the overthrow of President Sukarno raised the ire of the military regime that succeeded him, with long-term effects on the Program's relations with the Suharto government.

THE EARLY YEARS

The turmoil of the mid 1960s came after a decade during which the Southeast Asia Program had established itself as the leading center of scholarship on the region not only in the United States, but perhaps throughout the world, years when, as it was later described, "Cornell was not only pre-eminent but also to a large extent unique."¹

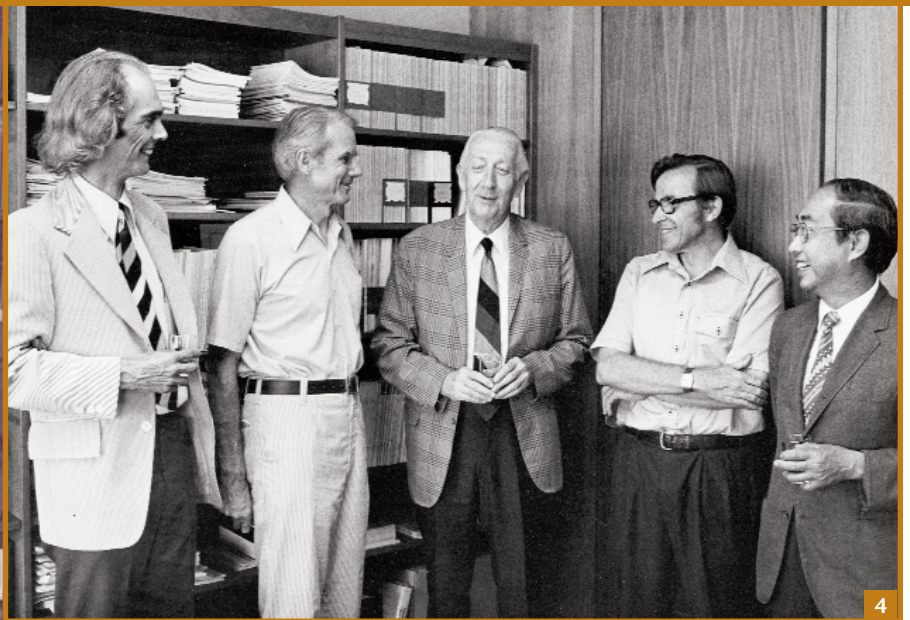
The Program was established in 1950, when the Rockefeller Foundation, aware of the region's growing importance in international affairs, became interested in sponsoring research and teaching on East and Southeast Asia. A Southeast Asia Program headed by Raymond Kennedy, a historian working on the Netherlands Indies, had already been established at Yale with Carnegie funds. But C. Burton Fahs, who headed Rockefeller's division on Asia and was himself a Japan historian, felt that the Yale program should have competition and believed that another program focusing principally on mainland Southeast Asia should be established at some other university. Cornell was a natural candidate, for over the previous decade, Lauriston Sharp, a young anthropologist working on the Thai peoples, had been fostering Southeast Asian studies there. Sharp had joined Cornell's faculty in 1936 and soon became the first chairman of the university's newly established Department of Anthropology and Sociology. In early 1945 Sharp was called to Washington and spent over a year as assistant director of the Southeast Asia Division of the State Department, where he was shocked to discover the scanty knowledge of Southeast Asian countries on which American policy toward the area was based. In 1947, a year after Sharp's return from Washington, the Carnegie Corporation awarded Cornell a grant for advanced work in anthropology, and with his share of these funds Sharp established the Cornell Thailand Project focusing on "the study of the social and psychological effects of technological change" in rural Thailand.²



By 1950 there were a number of able graduate students studying under Professor Sharp, and he and Burton Fahs held discussions on how Rockefeller could help expand the study of Southeast Asia at Cornell. Subsequent to their conversations Fahs wrote to Cornell's acting president, C.W. de Kiewiet:

It has been obvious for a long time that the United States needs a second major center on Southeast Asian studies. The existing center at Yale has been an important contribution, but is quite inadequate to meet national needs.... I do not, of course, wish to press the University to move in any direction which is not in accordance with your own interests and desires. The need, at this time, for more Southeast Asia studies is, however, so great that I feel I should bring this possibility to your attention.³

Fahs then urged that “work on the Orient” at Cornell should be reorganized “to make Southeast Asia the common focus for your interests.” His priorities did not fully accord with those of Asia specialists at Cornell, who from the beginning were determined that any program on Southeast Asia should be an expansion of Cornell's offerings on Asia as a whole and should not in any way divert the scholarly focus from such countries as China, Japan and India. In late fall 1950, with encouragement from Burton Fahs and also from Knight Biggerstaff, the chairman of Far Eastern Studies at Cornell, the university presented Rockefeller with a proposal for expanding the study of the Southeast Asian region, and on December 8 the foundation informed President de Kiewiet that it was awarding the university a sum of \$325,000 for a 5-year program in Southeast Asian studies.



During the Program's first three years of operations it succeeded in spreading Cornell's coverage of Southeast Asia from Thailand alone to virtually every major country of the region except for the Indochinese states,⁴ with special emphasis on Indonesia, Burma, and the Philippines. Indonesia became a major focus of graduate research after George Kahin joined the Program in 1951 and became its executive director, and when in 1952 John Echols, a specialist on language and linguistics, who had prepared the first Indonesian language program for the State Department's Foreign Service Institute, also joined the Program and took a central role not only in language teaching but also in developing the library's holdings on Indonesia and Southeast Asia as a whole. Recognizing Cornell's strength on modern Indonesia,⁵ the Ford Foundation, in early 1954, decided to fund a project at Cornell under Professor Kahin's direction, focused on Indonesia's government and politics.⁶ In 1953, Frank Golay, an economist working on the Philippines, who had been serving in the international division of the Federal Reserve Board, also joined the Program, extending its coverage geographically and to another discipline. These four men —Sharp, Kahin, Echols, and Golay — formed the core of the program as it developed during the 1950s and beyond.

One of the major reasons that the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell outpaced those being established at other universities was that, from the beginning, Sharp and Kahin insisted on lodging all Program faculty in a discipline department, ensuring that all PhD students studying the area receive their degrees in a discipline, with only a minor in Southeast Asian studies.⁷ At the same time Lauriston Sharp and his colleagues emphasized two other major priorities: developing a language program that offered as wide as possible a coverage of the major Southeast Asian languages; and, on the basis of the already-existing Wason



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Collection on East Asia, building up a library collection adequate for teaching and research and, if possible, of a sufficiently high quality to make Cornell a world center for scholarship on Southeast Asia. Because of the paucity of teaching materials on Southeast Asia, they also stressed the importance of creating original language texts and of distributing the preliminary results of the students' field research through a speedy and cheap series of publications produced by the Program and by the Modern Indonesia Project.

During the Program's early years these publications focused on making available the raw research data gathered by graduate students in the field, so most of the works produced were not polished monographs, but interim reports, translations of indigenous documents, and bibliographies that came to form a resource base for all future scholars working on Southeast Asia. By 1970, the Program had produced about 80 volumes in its Data Paper series, and CMIP 50 volumes in the several series it published, in addition to the twice-yearly journal "Indonesia" which started publication in April 1966.

Central to the success of the Southeast Asia Program during the 1950s was the quality of the graduate students it was able to attract and the sense of camaraderie and common purpose these students developed among themselves and with the faculty. These graduate students included a substantial number from the Southeast Asian countries themselves, for the Program's faculty emphasized the importance of training Southeast Asian students both in their home countries and, if they qualified, in Western universities. In his first report to the Ford Foundation on the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project (CMIP), Professor Kahin wrote:

As the Project has now been established, the largest portion of the research is and will continue to be carried out by Indonesians. In general

Western personnel are being used in only those sectors of research where Indonesians do not have the requisite discipline training, and language skills. The only sectors which are largely reserved for Western personnel are the studies of the Chinese minority and of Communism.⁸

Many of the Southeast Asians carrying out research in their own countries came to Cornell to continue their studies, forming a substantial percentage of the Program's graduates and contributing to its character and to the experience of the American students.⁹

A key factor in the élan among the Program's graduate students lay in the fact that in 1955 the Indonesia Project succeeded in renting half of an old fraternity building at 102 West Avenue for research initially on Indonesia but eventually on Southeast Asia as a whole. In 1958 Cornell's President Deane Malott, who had "become keenly interested in CMIP's work and enthusiastic about its accomplishments" turned the entire building over to the Project and no longer charged it rent.¹⁰ In addition to the Project's administrative and publications offices, 102 West Avenue also provided offices for visiting fellows and graduate students in the Southeast Asia Program who had returned from the field and were writing up their dissertations. One such student, Ruth McVey, who became a leading scholar of Southeast Asian politics, credited 102 with providing a unique aspect to her graduate experience, when she noted that in later years Yale was "trying to create some of the same kind of atmosphere ... that there was in the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell. Because really the sense of collectivity here and the close cooperation between the students was, I think, the most important thing, certainly when I was at Cornell ... this sense of being all somehow

one family.”¹¹ She went so far as to dedicate her classic study *The Rise of Indonesian Communism* to “102 West Avenue.”

By the end of the 1950s, Cornell’s library holdings were developing into the world’s pre-eminent collection on Southeast Asia, thanks largely to the selfless efforts of Professor John Echols, who would work “late into the night writing letters to hundreds of scholars and collectors around the world to enlist their help in acquiring rare and ephemeral items.”¹² The personal involvement of so many of the Program’s students and faculty helped make Cornell’s collection unique, for Professor Echols would press students and professors carrying out research in Southeast Asia to seek out and send back to Cornell all the local publications they could find, however ephemeral, promising to reimburse them for the expenses involved.

In 1958 Cornell was designated a National Resource Center for Southeast Asian Studies, a designation still held today, almost a half century later. By the early 1960s Southeast Asia centers were being established at other universities, for the US government, in compliance with a federal initiative introduced in 1959 to promote international studies, had now joined the foundations in sponsoring graduate study of Southeast Asia. As a National Resource Center, SEAP, together with a growing number of programs at other American universities, received federal funding for graduate language and area studies and funds to support language teaching and library acquisitions, and, later, outreach activities.¹³

THE 1960S

The largely uncontroversial nature of the Southeast Asia Program in the 1950s changed during the turmoil and conflict that characterized the subsequent decade.

The upheavals of the 1960s, of course, embroiled the whole Cornell campus, along with university campuses across the United States, as well as much of American society. Student activism focused initially on the civil rights movement and battles surrounding the place of minorities on university campuses. But gradually, after President Lyndon Johnson escalated American involvement in Vietnam in the aftermath of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution of August 1964, these other issues became tied to opposition to the Vietnam War.

At the time, Cornell’s Southeast Asia Program lacked great expertise on Vietnam, for few American scholars had conducted research in the Indochina states, perhaps because their study was still seen largely as the prerogative of French academics. Though SEAP made a considerable effort to compensate for its deficiency in this field by inviting visiting scholars to give lectures and offer seminars at Cornell, the paucity of American specialists on Vietnam meant that these visitors usually had to be brought in from abroad.¹⁴ Nevertheless, because of its strength in scholarship on Southeast Asia as a whole, the Program’s professors and students were drawn into the Vietnam debate.

During at least the first year following passage of the Tonkin Resolution, students were not greatly involved in protests against the war. But after April 1965, when President Johnson began a

massive bombing campaign against North Vietnam and as the draft became a matter of concern to many on campus, student activism began to embrace antiwar activities along with greater racial justice and civil rights. Professor Kahin was invited to be keynote speaker against the Vietnam War at the first National Teach-In held in Washington DC on May 16, 1965; students began to burn their draft cards; sit-ins protested ROTC recruitment on the Cornell campus; and antiwar teach-ins were held here as at other universities across the country. Scholars in the Program felt the need to correct some of the inaccurate information being generated by the Johnson administration. Graduate students and a few professors, some gathered into the “Cornell Vietnam Mobilization Committee,” began to draw up fact sheets, chronologies, and articles, providing scholars at other universities and politicians in Washington with arguments and historical information on which to base their opposition to what they saw as a misguided war.

At the same time, however, in planning to pursue the war the American government was in part reliant on anthropological research on the Southeast Asian societies and peoples among whom the war was being conducted. Washington’s use of this research became a basis for accusations by radical students that some anthropology departments and area centers, including those at Cornell, were assisting the government in waging the war in Southeast Asia. The research viewed as most detrimental to the Southeast Asian countries was that conducted at the Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory (CAL) in Buffalo which in 1967 had received a \$1.5 million contract from the Department of Defense to help design counter-insurgency programs in Thailand.¹⁵ The Southeast Asia Program, together with the newly formed Center for International Studies (CIS), demanded that CAL be severed from the University and it was.¹⁶ But this fact did not prevent some activists on campus two years later from accusing faculty members, particularly those working on Thailand, of cooperating with the US government in its counter-insurgency programs.

On the racial issue student unrest erupted in the takeover of Willard Straight Hall by members of the Afro-American Society (AAS) in April 1969. What was seen by some faculty and trustees as the university administration’s capitulation to demands by armed students led to the protest resignations of senior members of the Government Department and the suspension of many classes throughout the university.¹⁷ Although there was no serious violence, the presence of guns on campus, dramatized in pictures appearing in the national press, cast a shadow over relationships among faculty and students and between Cornell and Ithaca for several years to come.

The protests over the Vietnam War did not explode in so dramatic a fashion, although they were equally widespread on campus. Antiwar students held frequent meetings and demonstrations, where some of them confronted faculty members, accusing them of complicity with the policy makers in Washington. The most serious threat of violence occurred when the war was extended to Cambodia at the end of April 1970. After Nixon announced that American and Vietnamese forces were

invading Cambodia, campuses throughout the United States erupted in protests. The worst violence occurred at Kent State University where National Guard soldiers fired on demonstrating students, killing four of them and wounding fifteen others. At Cornell, too, there were fears of bloodshed as antiwar students planned a peaceful march down the hill to Ithaca protesting the Cambodia invasion, and the county district attorney warned the Cornell administration that several hundred local people were

preparing to meet them with guns. Averting the threat of violence, professors and graduate students, mostly from the Southeast Asia Program, succeeded in persuading the activists to call off the march and direct their activities in a more peaceful, and perhaps productive, direction. Students prepared packets of materials on Cambodia, the Vietnam War, and the voting records of their local Congressmen, which they then used in meeting with their Congressional representatives in Washington. As a



result nearly a hundred students spent much of the summer at the Capitol lobbying against the war.

But the Vietnam War was not the only crisis in Southeast Asia that had a profound impact on Cornell. It also became deeply involved in the disputes over the way in which in Indonesia the military regime of President Suharto replaced the post-independence government of President Sukarno. In the closing months of 1965, a visiting scholar and two graduate students at Cornell—Ruth McVey, Ben Anderson, and Fred Bunnell—cooperated in an attempt to reconstruct the events surrounding Lt. Col. Untung's announcement of the "September 30th Movement" and its bloody aftermath. They scoured the Indonesian press and radio broadcasts to learn what they could about the background to the so-called "coup" and the subsequent massacres, and in January 1966 completed a draft study of what had occurred. They circulated this "Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia" on a confidential basis to friends, specialists, and government officials for their information and comments.¹⁸ In the opening paragraph of the synopsis to their paper, which was soon leaked, they summarized its conclusions as follows:

The weight of the evidence so far assembled and the (admittedly always fragile) logic of probabilities indicate that the coup of October 1, 1965 was neither the work of the PKI [Indonesian Communist Party] nor of Soekarno himself. Though both were deeply involved, it was after the coup plans were well under way....The actual originators of the coup are to be found not in Djakarta, but in Central Java, among middle-level Army officers in Semarang, at the Headquarters of the Seventh (Diponegoro) Territorial Division.

Their conclusions flew in the face of the official version of events then being put forward by the Indonesian military and implicitly questioned the new government's claims to legitimacy. Over the next several years, relationships between Indonesia scholars at Cornell and the regime in Indonesia became tense. The Suharto government, as well as some American officials, attempted to persuade the authors to retract their statements or the faculty to disown their right to publish their findings. On two occasions in the mid-1970s delegations from the Indonesian military visited Cornell, holding seminars and bringing materials on the coup, even offering to set up a joint project between Cornell and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta on the Indonesian Revolution. Eventually, however, attempts at compromise broke down as it became increasingly difficult for scholars, especially from Cornell, to conduct any independent research on Indonesia's modern history and politics that might reach conclusions not in accord with the government's viewpoint. Several scholars, including Ben Anderson and George Kahin, had been placed on the Indonesian government's black list, making it almost impossible for them to enter the country. The hardships imposed by this ban were lessened by the fact that scholars in the Southeast Asia Program generally had



interests transcending their country of specialization. As Ben Anderson wrote nearly thirty years later:

Special in some ways Indonesia might be in those days, but it was always thought about and studied in a Southeast Asian frame. This frame was only reinforced by the experience of the Vietnam War years, which, to various extents, forced scholars and students studying very different countries and problems to take stands, for or against the war, as Southeast Asianists. And not merely for intellectual or political reasons. No matter what our particular scholarly research interests, we had grown up together, studied together, and read and criticized each other's work; in a certain way, we were chained together by a Southeast Asia to which, in one sense, we had helped give a certain reality.¹⁹

When Indonesia was closed to him, Ben Anderson, then, was able to move the major focus of his research to Thailand (as did Ruth McVey) and later the Philippines, while George Kahin had, since 1965, been devoting most of his research and writing to American involvement in the Vietnam War.

A LASTING LEGACY

During the first twenty years of its existence the Program brought so much to Cornell in the form of funding and prestige that during these two decades it was able to act largely independently in its relationship with outside foundations and through direct contact with top levels of the university administration. The Center for International Studies (CIS) (later named the Einaudi Center) was established in 1965 and by the early 1970s, as the university's organization became more complex, SEAP became part of a broader network of international programs.

Many of the students trained at Cornell over the Program's first two decades moved on to occupy "key positions in the academic world and in public life, not only in the US, the UK and Australia, but also throughout Southeast Asia." New federal funding of the area centers in other American universities, initially headed and staffed to a great extent by Cornell Southeast Asia Program graduates, enabled some of these other centers to follow the lead set by Cornell in the field of Southeast Asian studies. In the ensuing decades the program continued to grow, with multiple hires in disciplines across the university. Meanwhile, the international reputation of the John M. Echols Collection has kept pace with its ever-expanding holdings, making it the "jewel in the crown" of the Southeast Asia Program, "far ahead of any similar archive in the world."²⁰ The Southeast Asia Program has


built a legacy that transcends the controversies and crises that marked its earlier years, outlasting any shifts of American attention to other more currently tumultuous areas of the world. 

PHOTO CAPTIONS FOR PAGES 9-14

- 1 *Indonesia seminar on the Arts Quad, May 1958. George Kahin (with back to tree) is leading a discussion with students including John Smail, Herbert Feith, Josef Silverstein, Phyllis Rolnick, Ben Anderson and four US Foreign Service officers, John Lloyd, Marshall Wright, James Freeman and Edward Ingraham*
- 2 *Lauriston Sharp leads a Thailand seminar in 1962. Tom Kirsch is seated at the head of the table*
- 3 *Knight Biggerstaff and Lauriston Sharp, meeting in the early 1950s*
- 4 *David Wyatt, Frank Golay, John Echols, George Kahin, and Giok-po Oey (curator) celebrate in the newly named John M. Echols Collection, 1977*
- 5 *Ruth McVey addresses a Thursday brown-bag seminar at 102 West Avenue, Fall 1982. (In the front row L to R: T'ien Ju-K'ang, Nancy Peluso, John Wolff, Ruchira Mendiones, David Marr, and Giok-po Oey. Thak Chaloemtiarana and Marty Hatch can be seen standing in the doorway.)*
- 6 *Students working at the Cornell Vietnam Mobilization Committee office, 1969. SEAP student Gareth Porter is in the foreground on the right*
- 7 *George Kahin, Ruth McVey, and Ben Anderson at 102 West Avenue, 1982*

REFERENCES

- ¹ Report by David Chandler on his assessment visit to Cornell, April 26-29 1999.
- ² Other parts of the grant went for programs on India, South America (Peru) and the Southwest United States (the Navajo). "Southeast Asia Program Progress Report 1951," (typescript), p. 15.
- ³ Letter from Charles B. Fahs to Dr. C.W. de Kiewiet, August 16, 1950.
- ⁴ These were still under French colonial control and largely closed to outside researchers.
- ⁵ This strength was further bolstered by the presence of Claire Holt, a dancer and art historian who had spent much of the 1930s in Java and after resigning from the State Department now taught Indonesian language and culture at Cornell.
- ⁶ They also approved projects on Indonesia's economy at MIT under Professor Benjamin Higgins, and its peasant and plantation agriculture at Yale under Professor Karl Pelzer, as well as other projects on India and Japan, George McT. Kahin, "Cornell's Modern Indonesia Project," *Indonesia* 48 (October 1989), p. 2. Initially the foundation wanted special emphasis to be given to research on the Communist movement but Kahin persuaded them to expand the Project's coverage to the whole spectrum of Indonesia's politics, with the Islamic and social democratic components receiving equal attention. George McT. Kahin, *Southeast Asia: A Testament* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 140-41.
- ⁷ Here they drew lessons from the early failure of Southeast Asia Programs at Yale and Berkeley, which had been built up autonomously from the discipline departments and which awarded area degrees that proved of little use to their graduates in seeking teaching posts thereafter. Yale's program was also disadvantaged by the deaths of its two first heads, Raymond Kennedy being shot to death in West Java, and John Embree dying in a traffic accident in New Haven.
- ⁸ "Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Report for Period July 1, 1954 – September 30, 1955" (typescript), pp. 1-2
- ⁹ Among the Indonesians involved in the early research of the Indonesia Project, several succeeded in obtaining advanced degrees from Cornell, including Samiati Alisjahbana (MA, 1954), Harsja Bachtar (MA, 1959) I.N. Djajadiningrat (MA, 1957), Tapi Omas Ihromi-Simatupang (MA, 1961), Deliar Noer (PhD, 1963), Zahara Daulay Noer (MA, 1960), Soelaeman Soemardi (MA, 1961), Selo Soemardjan (PhD, 1959), Mely Giok-Lan Tan (MA, 1961), and Iskandar Tedjasukmana (PhD, 1961)
- ¹⁰ Kahin, "Cornell's Modern Indonesia Project," p. 23.
- ¹¹ Transcript of interview by Martin Hatch with Ruth McVey, September 24, 1994, p. 30.
- ¹² "John M. Echols," in *Southeast Asia Program 1982 Bulletin*.
- ¹³ Thak Chaloemtiarana, "Letter from the Director," *SEAP Fall 2003-Spring 2005 Bulletin*.
- ¹⁴ One exception was Bernard Fall, a Frenchman who had come to the United States in 1951 and was studying for his doctorate at Syracuse University. The Program supported him for a year in Ithaca, during which he prepared a monograph on "The Vietminh Regime" for the Program's Data Paper series. Among early visitors were Ngo Dinh Diem in 1953 and a dissident Vietnam specialist from the State Department, Paul Kattenburg. Later visitors included Tatsuro Yamamoto from Tokyo University, P.J. Honey from London University's School of Oriental and African Studies, and the respected French historian Philippe Devillers.
- ¹⁵ *Ithaca Journal*, September 14, 1967.
- ¹⁶ *Cornell Daily Sun*, October 2, 1967.
- ¹⁷ For contemporary accounts of these crises, see Newsweek, May 5, 1969 and Cushing Strout and David I Grossvogel, ed., *Divided We Stand: Reflections on the Crisis at Cornell* (New York: Doubleday, 1970).
- ¹⁸ It was eventually published under the same title in the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project's Interim Report Series in 1971.
- ¹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998), p.19.
- ²⁰ Both quotations in this paragraph come from the Chandler report.

THE RATIONALITY OF *Corporate Social Responsibility* *in Indonesia*

Marina Welker | Assistant Professor
of anthropology and Southeast Asian studies



In 2000, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan convened a new business, government, and civil society network: the Global Compact. The network's vision for the new millennium was a world order in which businesses voluntarily regulate themselves, report to the public on their social and environmental performance, and, out of enlightened self-interest, bring community development and progressive change to the countries where they operate. The Global Compact conferred new legitimacy upon the consultants, business schools, nongovernmental organizations, celebrities, and corporations that are part of the burgeoning industry of Corporate Social Responsibility, or CSR. CSR believers seek to serve the public good by channeling and extending corporate power, implicitly rejecting the possibility that the public might instead be served by disempowering or even dismantling corporations.

While Milton Friedman's followers depict CSR as a deviant form of capitalism, and many activists dismiss it as smoke and mirrors, my research takes the global CSR movement seriously as a set of social practices with significant social and material consequences that we can best understand and analyze within particular historical and geographic conjunctures. I examined CSR practices and rationalities in the mining industry over twenty-three months of research that took me from Newmont Mining

Corporation's headquarters in Denver to the villages that lie in the shadow of Newmont's Batu Hijau copper and gold mine, on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa.

The CSR industry has incorporated development industry experts and radical activists along with their technologies, moral vocabularies, and hybrid political beliefs. I found CSR experts used their moral lexicon of human rights, environmentalism, sustainability, participation, empowerment, transparency, accountability, and good governance in two ways. First, within corporations, CSR experts seek to institute new routines of self-regulation, self-restraint, and self-surveillance alongside new forms of public disclosure on environmental and social impacts. They generate soft, voluntary, transnational codes of conduct in forums with multiple "stakeholders" and "civil society representatives." Corporations also invent their own assessment criteria, which often remain proprietary secrets because they are treated as a source of competitive advantage. Using codes of conduct and assessment criteria, corporations install a cascade of social and environmental audit procedures. Audit results, in turn, are built into bonus structures in order to motivate employees to monitor, adjust, and document their performance. Corporate assessment practices generate new flows of information between a mining corporation's headquarters and distant, often recalcitrant mine

Marina Welker joined the Southeast Asia Program as an assistant professor of anthropology in fall 2006. Her research interests include corporations and capitalism, international development, global networks, nongovernmental organizations, political economy, social theory, and business history. Her dissertation was titled "Global Capitalism and the 'Caring Corporation': Mining and the Corporate Social Responsibility Movement in Indonesia and Denver," (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2006).

In 2004-5 she held the Weatherhead Fellowship and was a Resident Scholar at the School of American Research in Santa Fe. In addition to her research in Indonesia, she has lived in Thailand, where she worked as an assistant editor of *The BurmaNet News* (1997) and *The Irrawaddy* (1996-7). At Cornell her new course offerings include Power, Culture, and Society in Southeast Asia, the Anthropology of Development, and the Anthropology of Corporations.



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sites. Newmont officials in Denver, for example, can compare mines in Indonesia with those in Peru, Uzbekistan, and New Zealand. They also edit the audit data for public reports. By simultaneously reporting on flaws and proposing remediation measures, corporations anticipate the activist exposé and try to diminish its impact.

Second, beyond applying moral discourses to themselves, corporations investing in CSR apply these discourses towards knowing and controlling “stakeholders.” CSR experts transform the activist discourse of stakeholder *rights* (e.g. the “right-to-know” notion inherent in corporate transparency) into a discourse of stakeholder *responsibility* (e.g. the obligation of stakeholders themselves to be transparent). Yet “stakeholders” are not always persuaded by CSR experts. Residents of villages near Batu Hijau are not simply an undifferentiated mass of mine victims. Many reject the suppositions of CSR experts and seek, with varying degrees of success, to exercise agency over the mine and assert their own understanding of what its “social responsibility” ought to entail.

Villagers’ ability to influence the mine depends on their social position in village life and in the eyes of corporate officials. Those who are marginalized by gender, ethnicity, and class tend to see fewer mine benefits. Newmont’s Community Development and Community Relations field staff is almost entirely male, and the company contracts nongovernmental organizations to carry out literacy and maternal health programs aimed at women. By contrast, village elites, typically Sumbawan men who are civil servants, elected village represen-



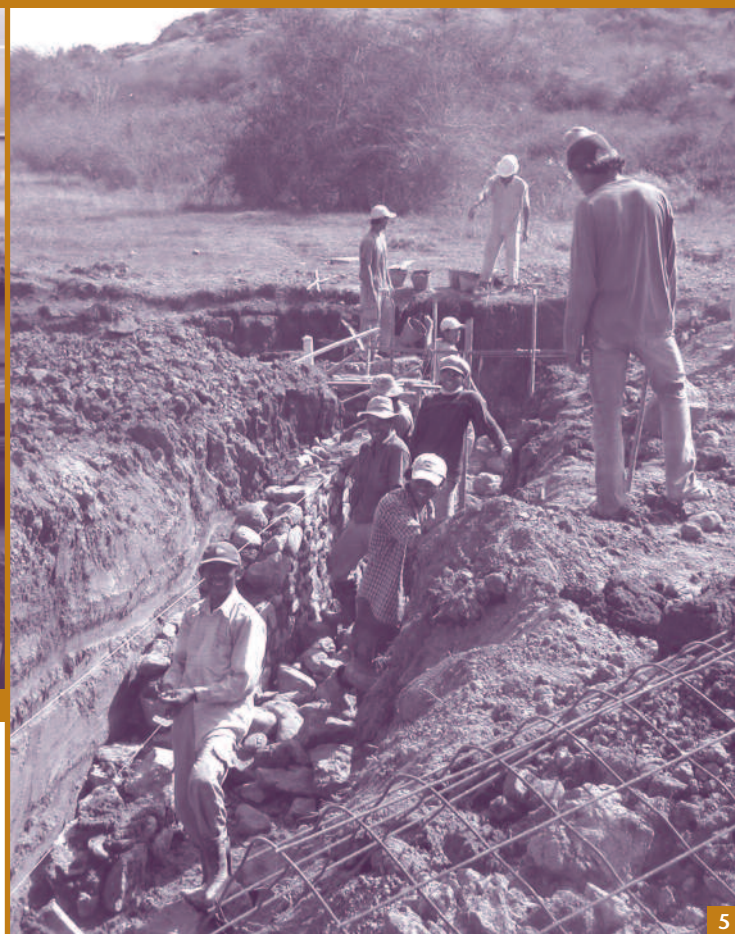
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tatives, and religious school headmasters, have set up businesses and NGOs to channel lucrative construction and supply contracts as well as community development assistance such as credit and agricultural subsidies.

Currently, the dominant wisdom of CSR in mining holds that companies whose presence is limited to the lifecycle of the mine must avoid creating relations of dependence. Rather than spending large amounts of money on unsustainable projects and infrastructure, mines should therefore work through “participatory” mechanisms to “empower” people to help themselves towards modest goals of improved education, agricultural practices, and small enterprises. Following contemporary development trends, CSR experts back away from utopian visions of modernization leading poor rural subjects to eventually attain Western standards of living.

Village elites, however, regard Newmont as the potential conduit of modern development of the kind that Suharto’s regime relentlessly promoted but, from a Sumbawan perspective, either deferred or conferred elsewhere. Village elites mobilize young men, and sometimes women and children, to demonstrate for mine jobs, contracts for local businesses, new community infrastructure, and other material flows. Because a one-day mine shutdown due to roadblocks would cost the mine over one million dollars, village elites can force Newmont to respond to their understanding of development and the mine’s social obligations. CSR experts find themselves caught between sustainable development trends and the economic rationale that legitimizes their

work to corporate investors – the promise to secure the community consent or “social license to operate” that will keep the mine running.

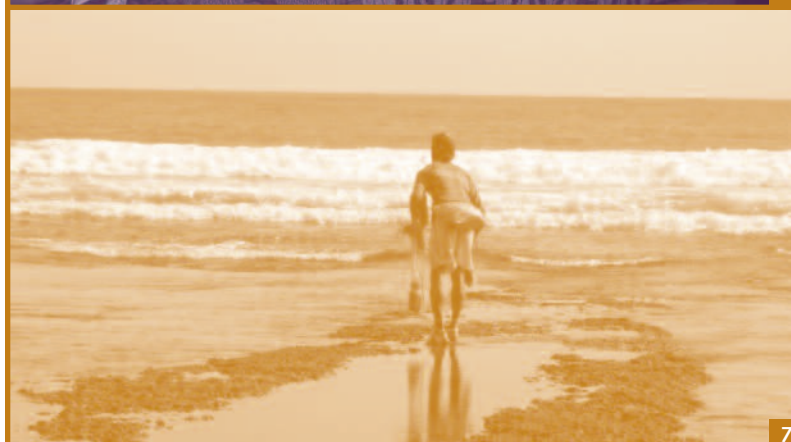
In response to village elites’ demands, Newmont has become the primary agent of development in southwest Sumbawa, building, maintaining, or subsidizing roads, health outposts, schools, dams, tourist facilities, mosques, power generators, trash collection facilities, public bathrooms, a mobile library, and a tsunami warning system. Newmont provides agricultural supplies and is also a source of credit, offering loans through its nominally independent foundation. Engaging in more conventional philanthropy, Newmont sponsors local sports teams and events and, in the predominantly Muslim region, presents gifts of religious paraphernalia to local religious leaders, invites villagers to religious lectures, hosts fast-breaking meals, and donates to Quranic recital competitions. Through these forms of corporate care, Newmont inhabits multiple public, private, secular, and sacred facets of everyday village life.

Village elites not only extort Suharto-style development from Newmont. They also cultivate relations of interdependence with the company by defending it – through quiet repression and even overt violence – against village critics as well as external activists who attack the company’s social and environmental record. Indonesian as well as international environmental activists oppose Newmont’s controversial practice of submarine tailings disposal or STD. Batu Hijau expels up to 160,000 tons of tailings (waste slurry) into the ocean every day. Newmont managers rec-

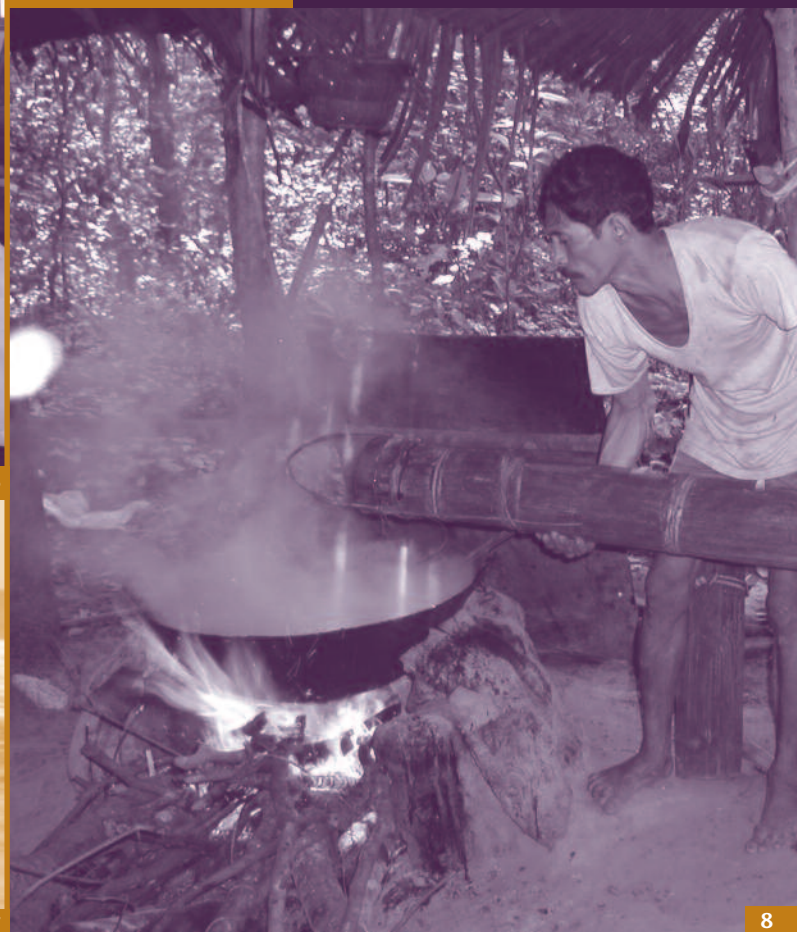




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oncile this waste disposal practice with the notion that the company is a socially responsible miner in part, I argue, through ingesting and playing with tailings. Before visiting NGOs, government officials, university students, local villagers and fishermen, mine managers plaster their hands and faces with tailings and drink the mine waste to convey the belief that it is harmless and STD is equivalent to “accelerated erosion.” Although this practice does not tell us anything scientifically useful about the impact of 58 million tons of tailings being expelled into the ocean each year, it may play a role in convincing Newmont managers that STD is environmentally neutral and, overall, the company is environmentally benevolent insofar as it works to save sea turtles, hold beach cleanups, and endow local villagers with environmental education. With these environmental convictions, managers also justify clandestine methods for gathering knowledge about and attacking environmental activists.

Such findings suggest that the impacts of CSR go far deeper than simple corporate greenwashing. They also raise questions for the Global Compact vision of CSR as a benevolent form of corporate governance and international development. Although many of the voluntary principles, policies, and programs CSR experts endorse are laudable, experts are setting up the industry to function as a surrogate for external controls on corporations. CSR also furnishes corporations with new rationalities and tools for knowing and controlling the social environments in which they operate. CSR experts are often all too susceptible to their own justifications; they claim that CSR expenditures are rational for securing a “social

license,” and as a result they process all CSR activities through risk assessment and cost-benefit mechanisms. This leaves the most powerful “stakeholders” as the primary beneficiaries of new mechanisms for negotiating with corporations. ☹

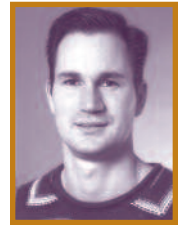
PHOTO CAPTIONS FOR PAGES 17-19

- 1 View of Newmont's gold and copper mine in Sumbawa, Indonesia
- 2 A subcontracted security guard shows the social assessor the laminated card he must wear around his neck, with the UN Declaration of Human Rights
- 3 Transmigrants from Lombok island learn literacy skills from non-governmental organizations contracted by Newmont
- 4 Village schoolchildren check out books from Newmont's mobile library. It is also equipped with a television that Newmont uses to screen company videos that showcase the mine's social and environmental activities and portray the mine's negative environmental impacts as minimal
- 5 Infrastructure projects such as irrigation channels provide wage-labor opportunities for men
- 6 An official from Newmont's Environment Department “socializes” tailings among middle schoolchildren, suggesting submarine tailings disposal poses no threat to human health
- 7 Although environmental activists warn that Newmont's daily disposal of up to 160,000 tons of tailings into the ocean pollutes the waters, local residents still search for fish and crustaceans at low tide
- 8 A man processes palm sugar (jalit) in his hut, which now falls within Newmont's concession. He and others have unsuccessfully pursued government and mine recognition of their traditional property rights within forest areas



Contradictory States: THE LIBRARY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Greg Green | Curator of the
Echols Collection on Southeast Asia



Old, worn books sit on equally worn shelves. Bindings, long broken by use and time, barely hold pages together. Piles of unwanted publications are strewn about in a back hallway. A card catalog sitting in a dusty, dark corner makes one wonder how anything is ever located on the shelves. This is the library in Southeast Asia.

Cutting-edge technology is used for researching the best methods to preserve and digitize fragile palm-leaf manuscripts. Electronic journal databases, capable of sharing full-text articles, reach out instantly to researchers worldwide. Collaborative research and information access projects with top institutions around the world are ongoing. This is also the library in Southeast Asia.

Many libraries in Southeast Asia exist in seemingly contradictory states, from the dilapidated and underfunded to the creators of world-renowned digital collections. The two descriptions above might well portray the national libraries of two different countries at different ends of the regional economic spectrum. However, they are just as likely to describe the same library viewed through two different lenses, where books seem lost in the wake of technology-driven projects of the future.

Whatever the situation is in the libraries you frequent in Southeast Asia, they are likely confronted with a similar set of contradictions. Libraries in the region constantly suffer from a deficiency in funding due to a general lack of interest from those with any power to change the situation. This creates an environment where, often within the same library, unique materials can be neglected and stored under horrible conditions while at the same time world-class projects are ongoing in the very next room. One glaring example will serve to illustrate the point.

The National Library of Laos perhaps sits on top of the list of libraries suffering from contradictory preservation issues. Due to the economic state of Laos, the difficulties the National



Library faces are to be expected. A quick walk through the main building of the Library, an old French structure in downtown Vientiane, reveals a number of problems. The building itself is in need of updating in order to properly store and provide access to the material within. Books that were never published with longevity in mind are clearly suffering the ravages of use, time and humidity. Public access computers are non-existent and those for staff use are both too few and too old. Space is so limited that most of the collection is stored off-site, making access difficult for all but the determined bugs bent on making a fine meal of the books.

On the opposite side of the coin, the National Library of Laos is home to a project that is the envy of many scholars and libraries in the region. A ten-year German funded and run grant to catalog and preserve fragile palm-leaf manuscripts through-

out the country has been a great boon to the country's literary legacy. The project trained librarians at the National Library to scour the countryside and note the existence of every manuscript they could locate. It also provided money to aid preservation work at the local level and to create a central repository for a large sample of manuscripts from around the country. As a final benefit, thousands of manuscripts were microfilmed and the film is now stored in a small air-conditioned building behind the main library. Just recently the same group won additional funding from the German government to digitize the microfilm. This will effectively eliminate the main flaw of the first project, difficult access to the final product. Researchers should soon be able to access thousands of manuscripts from anywhere in the world.

Thus although the National Library of Laos has likely the finest large-scale manuscript preservation and access program in the region, it has no budget for collection development or preservation of the rest of its collection. The key to the success of the manuscript project among so many financial difficulties facing

the government can claim it is looking out for the Library by keeping it on the list without ever having to actually send any precious foreign money along. The situation does not look to change any time soon so the Library must rely on foreign donors who seek it out directly with a specific project in mind.

So, with just enough money to sustain the most basic of operations, librarians at the National Library of Laos can only sit and wait for the next foreign donor to take interest. Or perhaps they could do more, if they had a little training in seeking out and writing grants for themselves. That's a difficult process without reliable Internet access, but still possible. Perhaps those of us who enjoy researching in libraries across the region could serve as links between their librarians and sources of outside funding. Those linkages could range from simply passing along information about grants to full participation in the grant writing process. However we may find ways to help, the need is truly urgent. Many libraries in Southeast Asia desperately lack funds to maintain collections of the past and to build collections for



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the Library is foreign money. In fact, without foreign money the manuscript project would not even exist. Even with generous funding for a decade, it all but halted progress just as soon as the initial round of funding ended. Work seems set to begin again with the promise of more money from the latest grant for digitization. However, no amount of international fame or inertial forward motion can overcome the reality that the Library simply has no budget to sustain such a project over the long term.

In fact, the Library is in a never ending budgetary holding pattern. Not nearly enough money comes in from the central government's budget to cover expenses. While the Library is on the government's list of prospective recipients of foreign money, it is constantly stuck in fourth or fifth place on that list. It never rises to the top where it would be eligible should a foreign donor ask the government where it most needs money. In this position,

the future. If the collected history is consumed by the bugs of today and collecting the present is neglected for lack of money, what chance have future scholars of finding the treasures of Southeast Asia that we now enjoy? ☹

PHOTO CAPTIONS FOR PAGES 21-22

- 1 Kongdeuane Nettavong, Director of the National Library of Laos, sits inspecting a recently acquired manuscript along with librarians from the Library's palm leaf manuscript room
- 2 A librarian at the National Library of Laos identifies a newly acquired manuscript
- 3 Storage cases displaying neatly aligned palm leaf manuscripts in the National Library of Laos



A “WICKED CREEPING:” *The Chettiars in Burma*



Sean Turnell | Economics Department,
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The economic history of Burma contains a myriad of controversial themes, but none has been quite as divisive as the role of the *Chettiars*. A community of moneylenders indigenous to Southern India, the *Chettiars* operated throughout the Southeast Asian territories of the British Empire. They played a particularly prominent role in Burma, where they became the major providers of the capital that turned the country into the “rice-bowl” of the region. Yet, the *Chettiars* were also vilified as rapacious usurers whose real purpose was to seize the land of the Burmese cultivator. This accusation became widespread in the wake of the global depression of the 1930s, during which paddy prices collapsed. This collapse, and the fact that the *Chettiars* applied British land-title law to enforce collateral pledges against their loans, brought about a substantial transfer of Burma’s cultivable land into their hands. Demonised thereafter, the *Chettiars* fled Burma when the country fell to the Japanese in 1942. They were never to return. Effectively banished by successive Burmese governments, the *Chettiars* remain reviled figures in the country to the present day.

In 2006 I spent my time at SEAP and Cornell (as a Visiting Fellow) completing a book on Burma’s monetary and financial history, in which the *Chettiars* have a starring role. In the book, however, I deliver a “not guilty” verdict with respect to the charges against the *Chettiars*. Employing modern economic theory to the issue, I found that the success of the *Chettiars* in Burma lay less in the high interest rates they charged, than it did in patterns of internal organization that provided solutions to the inherent problems faced by financial intermediaries. A proper functioning financial system could have provided better solutions perhaps for Burma’s long-term development, but Burma did not have such a system, then or now. Easy scapegoats for what went wrong, I believe the *Chettiars* merit history’s better judgement.

In the below I offer something of a vignette into the story of the *Chettiars* in Burma. Of course, for the full story one could hardly do better than to consult the vast array of primary sources on Burma held by the marvellous Kroch Library at Cornell. There are plenty of reasons to visit SEAP and Cornell – but this was excuse enough for me!

THE CHETTIARS IN BURMA

The *Chettiars* came from the Chettinad tract of what is now Tamil Nadu. A distinct sect of the *Vaisya* (commercial) caste, the *Chettiars* were originally salt traders who, sometime in the eighteenth century, became more widely known as financiers and facilitators for the trade in a range of commodities. By the early nineteenth century, however, *finance* had become the abiding specialization of the *Chettiars*, and they became famed lenders to India’s great land-owning families (*zaminders*) and in underwriting trade through the provision of *hundis* (more on that later).

The first, substantial, expansion of the *Chettiars* beyond their homeland was to (what was then) Ceylon, sometime in the second decade of the eighteenth century. The motivation seems to have been simply the offer of higher returns on their capital – nearly double that which they could earn at home. Establishing links with European banks, they followed the British Empire into (what is now) Malaysia and Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, as well as the former French colonial territories of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Of all their overseas spheres of operations, however, it was Burma that dominated. The tin, rubber, tea and opium trades of maritime Asia created a ready demand for *Chettiar* capital, but this was significantly overshadowed by the volume of credit demand, and the quality of the collateral, that could be yielded from the expanding “rice frontier” of Burma.

The first Chettians arrived in Burma at the outset of British rule – in 1826 accompanying Indian troops and laborers following the first Anglo-Burmese war. It was, however, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the passing of the *Burma Land Act* in 1876 that brought about the first substantial movement of Chettians into Burma. Cutting shipping times to and from Europe by half, the opening of the Suez Canal not only directly opened up European markets to rice exports from Burma, it also stimulated demand for the commodity more generally in a region suddenly exposed to greatly expanded commercial opportunities. Meanwhile the *Burma Land Act* revolutionized land tenure arrangements in Burma, essentially importing British “property rights” and creating the ability of cultivators to pledge land as collateral against loans such as those offered by the Chettians. By 1880 the Chettians had fanned out throughout Burma and by the end of the century they had become by far the most significant providers of capital to the cultivators that were transforming Burma into the “rice bowl” of renown. By 1930 there were nearly 2,000 Chettiar offices throughout Burma (most concentrated in Rangoon and the Irrawaddy Delta), supporting total lending of almost 1 billion rupees (about \$US3.5 billion today) – or roughly equivalent to that of all British investments in Burma combined.

A deeply significant role played by the Chettians was the way in which they functioned as a “bridge” between what had formerly been the subsistence agricultural economy of Burma, and the European banks that had newly become interested in the country. This role was similar to that played by *compradors* elsewhere in Southeast Asia. It was celebrated thus by the Diwan Bahadur Murugappa Chettiar, the leading spokesperson for the Chettians in Burma at a government enquiry into their activities in 1930:

The banking concerns carrying on business on European lines did not and do not care to run the risk of advancing money to indigenous cultivators and traders; and it is left to the Chettians to undertake the financing of such classes, dealings with whom are naturally a source of heavy risks. So far as banking business is concerned the Chettiar banker is the financial back-bone of the people....

CHETTIAR BANKING OPERATIONS

The Chettians carried out an extraordinarily wide range of banking business in Burma. They made loans, took in deposits, remitted funds, discounted hundis, honored checks, exchanged money, dealt in gold, and kept valuables for safe-keeping. They were, in essence, a “one-stop-shop” that covered pretty much the gamut of financial needs, especially those of agriculturalists and cultivators.

But, of course, the Chettians were known above all for *lending* money and in this activity they were extraordinarily liberal. They avoided obvious speculative loans, but were otherwise willing to lend more or less for *any* enterprise that offered security and profit. Importantly, their loans were not determined by the purpose of the loan or the identity of the borrower – a *commercial* virtue that brought with it the considerable *social* virtue that they dealt with people of all races, classes and creeds on equal terms. This was not something that could be said of most other lenders in Burma. Chettiar lending was overwhelmingly made to agriculturalists, but this was because it was precisely this sector that most fulfilled their profitability and security prerequisites, rather than any philosophical predisposition to rural pursuits. Crop-loans and loans for land purchase, redemption and improvement, were the most common forms of Chettiar lending to agriculturalists. Cultivators typically drew multiple loans from their Chettiar lender throughout the year according to season – for the purchase of seed, transplanting and broadcasting, for payments to laborers,

IMPORTANTLY, THEIR LOANS WERE NOT DETERMINED BY THE PURPOSE OF THE LOAN OR THE IDENTITY OF THE BORROWER – A COMMERCIAL VIRTUE THAT BROUGHT WITH IT THE CONSIDERABLE SOCIAL VIRTUE THAT THEY DEALT WITH PEOPLE OF ALL RACES, CLASSES AND CREEDS ON EQUAL TERMS.

for the purchase of cattle, to repair dykes and borders, and to meet general expenses. These multiple loans constituted a type of “revolving credit” facility, upon which repayment was due only once a year, after the sale of the cultivator’s crop. Recognising the essential fungibility of money, however, (a fact often overlooked by other lenders in Burma) Chettians also lent for a range of cultivator needs – for marriage expenses, funerals, religious and other social festivities, and for household contingencies generally. Chettians were also the providers of funds to other lenders – primarily Burmese, and a mixture of professional moneylenders and large land-owning families who on-lent (mostly to their employees and tenants) for consumption purposes.

One of the most important financial products provided by the Chettians in Burma were *hundis*. Hundis were (and are) bills of exchange that could be used both to remit funds and to advance credit. An ancient financial device used in India and surrounding countries well-before the dominance of Europeans in regional commerce, they were integral to the operation of indigenous bankers such as the Chettians. Today hundis are well-known for their use in informal remittance systems, in which context the word hundi has an identical meaning to *hawala*, *hui kwan*, *chiaio hui*, *poey kwan* – and various similar but differently named instruments in use around the world. The word “hundi” is derived from Sanskrit and means simply to “collect”. Its origins can be readily identified by the fact that “hundi” is also the word employed to describe the collection box in a Hindu temple.

Chettians generally did not charge for hundis issued to people who were otherwise their customers as borrowers or depositors. For people for whom they had no existing relationship, charges were not much more than a couple of “annas” per 100 rupees. Such charges were very competitive with other remittance forms, but perhaps the greatest competitive advantage enjoyed by the *Chettians* was the ubiquity of their presence – enabling hundis to be sent to Rangoon, and to cities throughout South and South-East Asia, from all but the humblest of villages.

INTEREST RATES

One component of the hostility to the *Chettians* was the accusation that the interest rates they charged were usurious and, as such, were the means by which later loan default and the seizure of land was activated.

The question of *Chettiar* interest rates is not easily settled, not least because of the data problems that might be expected given the passage of time, and the relative informality of the transactions in question. Very high *Chettiar* interest rates have been reported down the years, but most reliable accounts do not usually have them exceeding 25 percent per annum, and even rates of this magnitude tended to be restricted to loans without collateral. Typical cultivator loans secured against land seem to have averaged from 9 to 15 percent. To modern eyes, used to assessing interest rates in formal financial markets in a low inflationary environment, rates of 12 to 25 percent look quite high. Compared to typical moneylender rates of the era, however, they

THE INTEREST RATES CHARGED BY NON-CHETTIAR MONEYLENDERS IN BURMA VARIED ENORMOUSLY, BUT IT IS AMONGST THIS COHORT THAT “TRUE USURY” WAS PERHAPS APPARENT. THIS WAS ESPECIALLY THE CASE WITH REGARD TO SO-CALLED SABAPE LOANS – ADVANCES MADE “IN KIND” (USUALLY IN RICE) TO CULTIVATORS TO BE REPAID AFTER HARVEST.

were surprisingly low. This was especially true when one considers the interest rates charged by the *Chettians* competitors – the credit provided by Burmese moneylenders, shopkeepers (indigenous and non-indigenous), landlords, employers and so on. On this score, the *Chettians* compared very favorably. The interest rates charged by non-*Chettiar* moneylenders in Burma varied enormously, but it is amongst this cohort that “true usury” was perhaps apparent. This was especially the case with regard to so-called *sabape* loans – advances made “in kind” (usually in rice) to cultivators to be repaid after harvest. Such loans, most often made by Burmese landlords to their cultivator tenants and farm labourers, were subject to all manner of social norms, but the interest rates applicable on them usually ranged from 8 to 10 per cent *per month* – in per annum terms between around 150 and 220 per cent.

A MODERN APPRAISAL OF CHETTIAR INTEREST RATES

The interest rates charged by moneylenders such as the *Chettians* have, until recently, attracted little in the way of intellectual attention. This is understandable. For a millennia the actions of moneylenders have been easily explainable as simply the manifestation of malice and greed. As such, very little in the way of nuance or sophistication was required to explain the charges of “usurers,” “parasites,” “loan sharks,” “shylocks,” “leeches,” “vampires,” “dragons” – and all the other derogatory labels that have been created for the moneylender down the ages.

Of course there were, and no doubt are, many examples of rapacious moneylenders bent on expropriating land and bonding labor through debt. Economists, however, are (arguably) rarely satisfied in simple answers that ascribe generalized economic behavior to moral predilections. As such, especially over the last three decades, a large literature has grown up that has attempted to explain the behavior of moneylenders and the markets they operate in.

Prominent in this literature is the concept of “transactions costs.” In the context of moneylending, “transactions costs” is the umbrella term used by economists to refer to the expenses that creditors confront when making a loan. These include the costs of identifying and screening borrowers, processing and dispersing loans, collecting and monitoring repayments, assessing collateral, “policing” and salvaging loan delinquencies, and so on. Such costs are essentially invariant to the size of the loan – mean-

ing that they loom larger, *in percentage terms*, the smaller the size of the loan. Of course, it is precisely such “small” loans that are usually the stock and trade of moneylenders.

Very little data has survived regarding transactions costs for the *Chettians* in Burma, but modern studies of informal lenders in Burma and elsewhere typically estimate “administrative costs” of about 5

to 10 per cent of their loan book. Given advances in information technology in the intervening decades, it is difficult to imagine that the administrative costs of the *Chettians* in Burma could have been any less. There remains much controversy over the extent to which transaction costs can reasonably explain high moneylender interest rates, but if the numbers above are only proximately accurate for the *Chettians* in Burma, their interest rate charges hardly seem usurious.

A “flipside” to the transaction costs burden on moneylenders such as the *Chettians* is that their services imposed relatively *lower* transaction costs on their customers. Borrowers, like lenders, face a raft of transaction costs when seeking a loan – costs which are, for the most part, simply the mirror image of the transaction costs noted above on lenders. Borrower costs, especially for rural clients, rise according to the degree of “formality”

of the arrangements imposed by the lender. The more “formal” the arrangements, the less “access” poor, and/or geographically marginalised people have to credit. This is important since it is typically the case that most poor borrowers consider ready access to credit as rather more important than its cost (something widely-recognised in the modern “microfinance” movement). Juxtaposed against high interest rates then are what are usually convenient access and low transaction cost attributes of moneylenders – minimal loan procedures, quick cash availability, flexible payment and maturity schedules as well as the costs savings that result from the fact that the moneylender usually lives amongst his borrowers.

Such general “virtues” of moneylenders were readily apparent in the operations of the *Chettians* in Burma. Most *Chettiar* loans were organized in under an hour and *Chettians* were more or less accessible all day, every day. The following extract from the *Burma Provincial Banking Enquiry*, a far-reaching inquest into credit arrangements in Burma commissioned by the colonial government in 1930, gives us a flavor of *Chettiar* customer relations:

Chettians have no fixed hours and do not observe public or official holidays. Except for their own festivals of *Pangani Uthram* (in March or April) and *Thaipusam* (in January), when business may be stopped for about four days in all, they are ready to transact business on any day and at any time. This is often a great convenience to depositors who wish to withdraw money, and also to some borrowers whose circumstances make it desirable for them to conceal from others the fact that they are borrowing.

Beyond transactions costs, the question of risk – and risk premiums – must also be factored in when considering the interest rates charged by moneylenders. The greater the likelihood of borrower default, the greater the need for an interest rate margin sufficient to cushion the lender against loss. Arguably, moneylenders have always lent to borrowers, and into economic environments, of greater risk than considered acceptable to more formal lenders. Indeed, one of the hitherto assumed advantages moneylenders possess over their more formal competitors – their proximity to their clients (noted above) – is an example of the heightened risk they face from being less geographically diversified and more exposed to covariant shocks.

REASONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE CHETTIARS

How to account for the extraordinary dominance of the *Chettians* in rural finance in colonial Burma?

A traditional answer, widely-held amongst contemporary European observers, ascribed the success to various cultural attributes, especially as they related to the education of young

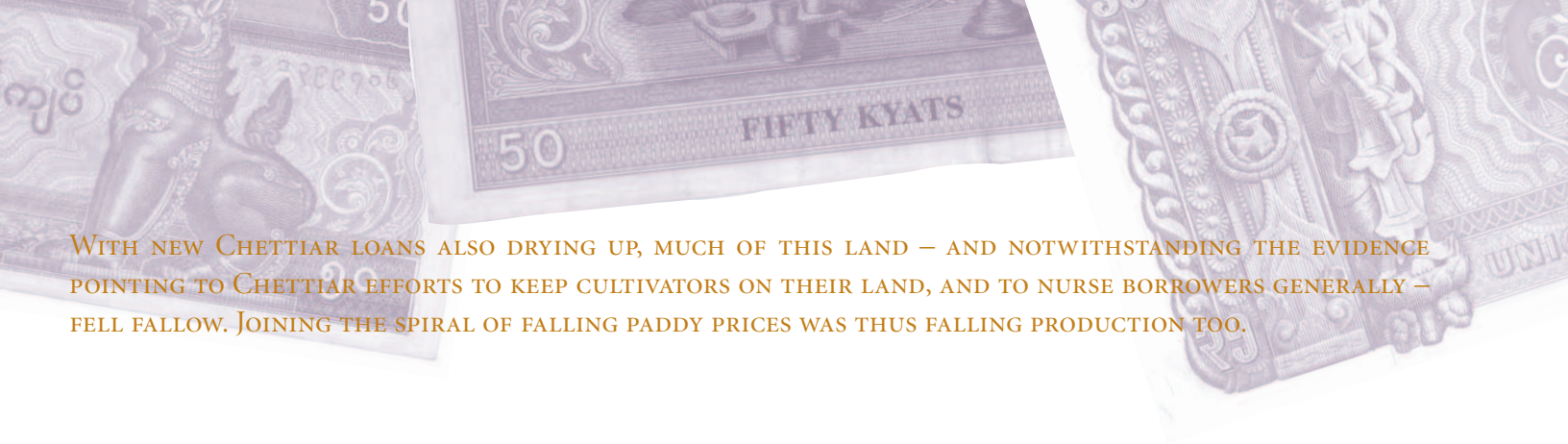
Chettiar males into the “secrets” of banking. Representative of such a view, rich in the stereotypes and prejudices of the era, was this assessment of Edgar Thurston, the legendary author in 1909 of the (Indian government-published) *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*:

A *Nattukottai Chetti* is a born banker. From his earliest childhood he is brought up on the family traditions of thrift and economy. When a male child is born in a *Nattukottai Chetti's* family, a certain sum is usually set aside to accumulate at compound interest and form a fund for the boy's education. As soon as he is ten or twelve, he begins to equip himself for the ancestral profession. He not only learns accounting and the theory of banking, but he has to apply his knowledge practically as an apprentice in his father's office. Thus in a *Chetti's* training, the theory and practice of banking are not divorced from each other, but go hand in hand, from the very start. When a boy is married he attains a responsible position in the family. Though, being a member of the joint Hindu family system, he may not make a separate home, yet he must bear his own financial burden. He is allotted a share in the paternal, or ancestral, estate and he must live on it. He alone enjoys all that he may earn and suffers for all that he may lose. So he naturally grows self-reliant and ambitious, with a keen desire to build a fortune for himself...Strict economy is scrupulously practised, and every little sum saved is invested at the highest rate of interest possible... So particular are the *Chettis* where money is concerned that, according to the stories current about them, if they have a visitor – even a relative – staying with them longer than a day he is quietly presented with a bill for his board at the end of the visit.

A modern, and arguably superior, explanation of the success of the *Chettians* in Burma would draw attention to the nature of *Chettiar* organisation in Burma. And, of particular importance in this context, the role of “trust” as the keystone of *Chettiar* finance. Of course, trust is the foundation of finance of all kind. Financial intermediaries of any stripe depend upon trust, without which their assets (merely promises to pay when all is said and done) are worthless, and without the trust of depositors and investors there would be nothing to “mediate” in any case. In modern banking systems such trust is established by norms of behavior that have been centuries in evolution, shaped by the state, the law, and other institutions (such as a central bank) that are easy to identify but hard to replicate.

In the case of the *Chettians*, “trust” was a function of caste and kin rather than more impersonal institutions, and most





WITH NEW CHETTIAR LOANS ALSO DRYING UP, MUCH OF THIS LAND — AND NOTWITHSTANDING THE EVIDENCE POINTING TO CHETTIAR EFFORTS TO KEEP CULTIVATORS ON THEIR LAND, AND TO NURSE BORROWERS GENERALLY — FELL FALLOW. JOINING THE SPIRAL OF FALLING PADDY PRICES WAS THUS FALLING PRODUCTION TOO.

Chettiar firms were formed by partnerships of individuals connected through marriage, home village ties and other loose forms of kinship. Interestingly, because of Hindu inheritance laws based on primogeniture, partnerships were generally not formed between close “blood” relations. This trust was manifested in a number of ways, including via a unique inter-firm lending/deposit system between *Chettiars* that not only provided individual *Chettiar* firms with much of their financing, but also constituted a most effective framework of “prudential” arrangements that acted to dampen systemic risk. Alleviating systemic risk in a modern financial system is the responsibility of a central bank, but in the *Chettiar* arrangements this role was subsumed by collective “caste” responsibility.

Perhaps the most important way through which trust was manifested in the spread of *Chettiar* operations in Burma, however, was via the way it was embodied in their “agency arrangements.” The use of “agents” allowed *Chettiars* without financial means to establish their own firms (usually in the rural hinterland) to act as agencies for their wealthier kinsmen. *Chettiar* agents had almost complete discretion on the lending out of their patron’s money and, indeed, they usually enjoyed “power of attorney” generally over what might be regarded as the activities of the “joint” firm. The arrangement seems to have been enormously successful in creating appropriate incentives for the agent, and *Chettiars* firms boasted not only that their agents strived harder than employees of European banks — but that as a consequence Burma had little need for such institutions organised on formal (“Western”) lines. Unwittingly, since the problem had yet to find a name, in their agency arrangements the *Chettiars* also solved what is known within the discipline of economics as the “principal and agent” problem. In the modern world solving the problem — which simply refers to the dilemma of how to ensure that the agent acts in the best interests of the principal — has generated all manner of methods, including franchising, incentive contracts, commission-based payments, and so on.

The *Chettiars* sent into the Burmese countryside as agents were exclusively male, and were almost never accompanied by spouses or other family members. Their “tour of duty” was usually for three years, after which they returned to Chettinad (many to marry) for around six months, before further postings elsewhere in Burma. Most *Chettiars* seemed to have lived an extraordinarily frugal existence, with such expenses as they had (including accommodation) usually met by the firm they represented. Typically between half and two-thirds of their entire tri-

ennium salary was paid a month after taking up their station, whereupon it was mixed in with the proprietors capital advance and employed in making loans. Key to an agent’s likelihood of establishing their own firm later was not so much their salary, but the size of the “bonus” they were able to secure at the end of their three year service — which typically amounted to around 10 percent of the profits they generated.

IT ALL COMES CRASHING DOWN...

Chettiar success in Burma came to a shuddering halt with the onset of the global depression of the 1930s. An event with severe economic repercussions in most countries, in Burma these were manifest primarily in the near total collapse of paddy prices. Paddy prices had been trending downwards across the latter half of the 1920s, but they went into a precipitous decline after 1930, reaching their nadir in 1933 when prices fell to less than a third of that prevailing a decade earlier. They remained at unremunerative levels until after the Second World War. The impact of the collapse in paddy prices was soon felt amongst the cultivators of Burma’s Irrawaddy Delta, many of whom, after suffering immense hardship as they tried to remain on their land, walked away from their paddy fields in search of employment as subsistence labor.

At the end of the chain of distress were the *Chettiars*. Unable to collect even interest payments on their loans, increasingly they came to foreclose on defaulting borrowers and to seize the pledged collateral. For the most part this was land. The result was what would prove a catastrophe for Burma’s future as vast tracts of the country’s cultivatable land passed into the *Chettiars* hands. By 1938 the proportion of the land in Burma’s principal rice growing districts in the hands of the *Chettiars* reached an astonishing 25 percent. With new *Chettiar* loans also drying up, much of this land — and notwithstanding the evidence pointing to *Chettiar* efforts to keep cultivators on their land, and to nurse borrowers generally — fell fallow. Joining the spiral of falling paddy prices was thus falling production too.

The alienation of much of the cultivatable land of Lower Burma, a tragic and seminal event in the political economy of Burma, would also prove to be the equally tragic climax to the story of the *Chettiars* in the country. Exposed to the (understandable) anger of indigenous cultivators and the demagoguery of Burmese nationalists of all stripes, they became easy scapegoats not just for the current economic distress, but the foreign

domination of Burma's economy more generally. The following testimony, relatively mild in the scheme of things, was presented by a Karen witness to the *Burma Provincial Banking Enquiry*:

Tersely and pointedly speaking, Chettiar banks are fiery dragons that parch every land that has the misfortune of coming under their wicked creeping. They are a hard-hearted lot that will ring out every drop of blood from the victims without compunction for the sake of their own interest...[T]he swindling, cheating, deception and oppression of the Chettians in the country, particularly among the ignorant folks, are well known and these are, to a large extent, responsible for the present impoverishment in the land.

Anti-*Chettiar* feeling in Burma during the depression soon turned into anti-Indian (and anti-foreigner) feeling generally, and in the latter half of the 1930s communal riots became commonplace. These were particularly severe in Rangoon – which over the fifty years from 1872 went from a city whose population was overwhelmingly Burmese to one in which, by 1930, had become predominantly Indian. The *Chettians* themselves were a tiny proportion of the Indian population in Rangoon (and the rest of Burma), the vast majority being poor Tamil laborers and sharecroppers. Whilst the *Chettians* were reviled for their perceived wealth and success, most of these other Indian migrants were despised for their poverty and for the competition they presented to equally poor and desperate Burmese in search of work.

In the wake of the Indo-Burmese riots, Burma's colonial government (which under the so-called "Dyarchy" constitution consisted of a Representative Assembly, but with most significant powers reserved still for the Governor) drew up a series of laws designed to limit the role of moneylenders such as the *Chettians* in the future. A sop to a rising cohort of Burmese politicians, these laws restricted the interest rates moneylenders could charge, imposed limits on the total amount of interest arrears that could build up, required the maintenance of proper and regular accounts, and required that all moneylenders be registered. Another set of laws, transparently directly aimed at the *Chettians*, disallowed the passing of land into the hands of non-resident moneylenders, eliminating in one stroke the ability to pledge land as collateral to such lenders. Most of these laws were not promulgated before the Second World War began, but they returned after the war and following Burma's independence. They largely remain on the books, where today they number amongst the many inhibitions to the development of a modern functioning financial system.

WAR AND FLIGHT

On March 7 1942, Rangoon fell to the forces of Imperial Japan. On May 1 Mandalay followed, and what remained of the Burmese colonial government evacuated Burma for the "hill-sta-

tion" of Simla, India – and exile. In a matter of months British rule in Burma had come to an end. The British would, of course, return temporarily after the war, but a chapter of Burma's history had come to a close.

The *Chettians* also fled Burma in front of the Japanese advance, but for them there would be no triumphant homecoming (however fleeting). We do not know how many *Chettians* died on the long march out of Burma (most on the road from Rangoon to Assam) but, given the high death toll amongst the full cohort of fleeing British and Indian merchants, workers and administrators in 1942, it could not have been trivial.

After the war the *Chettians* were, to all intents and purposes, prevented from returning to Burma. Burma achieved independence in 1948 and the country's new constitution declared that the state would hold ultimate title over all of the country's cultivatable land. Land use rights were available to cultivators, but this was of little benefit to the *Chettians*, since farmers they were not. The *Chettians* sought compensation for their lost property, and the issue became something of an irritant to the otherwise close relationship between the governments of newly-independent India and Burma. Meaningful progress on this front, moreover, was slow. When a military coup brought Burma's democracy to an end in 1962 any hopes the *Chettians* might have entertained for compensation were finally, irrevocably, dashed. The property they had acquired in roughly a century of moneylending in Burma was effectively nationalized by the new Burmese regime and, alas, ultimately dissipated by the same.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

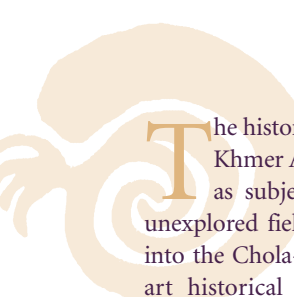
The story of the *Chettians* in Burma ended tragically, but it is not without useful lessons for those concerned for the country and its prospects. One of these lessons – essentially a warning – is that it highlights the dangers that come from circumstances that lead to a concentration of economic wealth in the hands of an ethnic minority. Such a concentration took place in the colonial era via the *Chettians*, but it is happening again in Burma today. Now the resented ethnic minority are economically-dominant Chinese business owners and traders rather than Indian moneylenders, but the oft-predicted backlash will surely follow the familiar pattern.

A second lesson from the story of the *Chettians* is more hopeful and, for that, all the more welcome for those of us all too familiar to pessimism when it comes to Burma. This lesson is simply that Burma's development disaster can perhaps be turned around rather more quickly than we often suppose. The application of sound property rights, together with the provision of adequate capital (as supplied back then by the *Chettians*) brought about a twenty-fold increase in Burma's agricultural output in the latter-half of the nineteenth century. Today Burma is somewhat off having a government interested in applying sound property rights, or facilitating the flow of adequate capital, but it will not be for ever thus. And, in this, lies hope. ☺

O goddess where art thou?

REEXAMINING THE FEMALE DIVINE PRESENCE IN KHMER ART

Soumya James | Ph.D. candidate in history of art and archaeology



The history, art, and politics of the South Indian Chola and Khmer Angkorean kingdoms have endured over the years as subjects of great interest to scholars. A critical, yet unexplored field that holds great promise of providing insight into the Chola-Khmer dynamic is a comparative study of their art historical traditions. The contemporaneous Chola and Khmer kingdoms had intriguing parallels in terms of their political constitution, religious beliefs and their investment in art and architecture. My research focuses on the cultural and political aspects that informed Khmer art, and highlights areas in which they diverged from their Chola counterparts. One such area of differentiation was in the representation of the feminine divine. For purposes of my research, I define “feminine divine” to mean sacred feminine power and energy, artistically represented either in abstract or anthropomorphic form. During the Chola period, goddess worship (whether Hindu or non-Hindu) was undeniably widespread. Their identities were often dynamic and constantly evolving in synchrony with the religious atmosphere in South India. These sensuously depicted sacred images were enshrined in caves and religious monuments, typically sculpted in relief or as free-standing sculptures. A literal counterpart in Khmer art is hard to find. The Khmers expressed sensuality in a very different manner—one word that comes to mind when looking at the Khmer female form is “elegance.” From their serene expression to their stately posture and the straight lines of their skirts, they are the very picture of dignity and grace. It appears that the artistic depiction of the Khmer female form informed modern Khmer historiography regarding the relationship between sexuality and power within Khmer culture. Vittorio Roveda (2005) in his book *Images of the Gods* has suggested that the de-eroticization of the Khmer female form in art indicated their passive status in Khmer culture. I am presently investigating whether this observation holds true, using an approach that integrates both visual and textual sources. Here I use current and revisionist findings about the identity and role of Chola goddesses to outline a research program that will provide insight

into their Khmer counterparts. My fieldwork experience in South India and Cambodia was invaluable in affording a haptic first-hand experience of the sites and monuments, an essential component of research of this nature.

PARALLELS BETWEEN THE CHOLA AND KHMER POLITIES

The Chola and Angkorean kingdoms were both founded in the 9th century making them political contemporaries. Post-colonial studies on the two polities suggest that the two might not have been the political colossi as considered by some earlier research.¹ The Cholas might have been a considerable political presence only within a relatively confined geographical sphere with the nature of their kingship being highly ritualistic (Stein 1999). Their political supremacy over outlying regions and other rivals was acknowledged through an allegiance to this ritual nature of kingship as well as by forging alliances through marriage. Similarly, it has been suggested that the Khmer kingdom emerged as the foremost political power wielding the necessary ritual and political authority above several other comparably qualified chiefdoms (Wolters 1999). Khmer inscriptions suggest that even after establishing the kingdom of Angkor, there occasionally were multiple claims to authority from both within and outside their political realm—some of the trends within Khmer art and architecture reflect such changes in the political environment. Despite these challenges, both the Chola and the Khmer remained a considerable presence in their respective regions for at least four centuries.

Art and architecture played a significant role in both polities. Their monuments and sculptures stand testament to the resources and care devoted to them by their patrons. From the single-celled shrines to the expansive complexes, soaring towers and vibrant sculptures, both Chola and Khmer art exhibit high-caliber artistic achievements and an impressive range of architectural development. Saivite Hinduism was likely the preferred

form of worship for both the Chola and Khmer kings, as suggested by the numerous temples dedicated to the god Siva.² Bruno Dagens (1985) has suggested that both the Cholas and the Khmers based their temple art and architecture on the tenets of the South Indian architectural guide called the *Mayamata*. In early works of Khmer historiography, written mainly by French colonial scholars, many comparisons were drawn between Indian and Khmer art and architecture, and often the latter was projected as a less authentic version of the former. The French writers compiled a wide range of material on Khmer art but it appears that some of their rather restrictive perspectives and notions continue to echo even in some contemporary writings.

ENCOUNTERING THE FEMININE DIVINE IN KHMER ART

Prasat Kravan

Roveda argues that Khmer society was a "...masculinized cultural and political domain that cultivated the ideology of power and hierarchical male bonding typical of absolutist states. The virile male body had such a dominant position in elite visual culture where women were marginalized in the semi-nude images of *apsaras* and *devatas*, representing idealized feminine forms. Women were simply mothers, sisters and wives whose bodies were de-eroticized, made passive and powerless." He goes on to say "They were the products of fantasy, made by male artists for male viewing" (Roveda 2005: 36). He states that unlike the Indian female forms, the Khmer forms were not sensually rendered in order to emphasize the sacred, despite the few occasions where this rule was relaxed like the ephebic guardians of Banteay Srei whom he cites as examples of androgynous masculinity. The few

examples of "tentative" female sensuality, he says, can be seen in the door guardians of the temples Bok, Krom and Bakheng. Roveda's statements provoke the following questions: are the sensual and the sacred mutually exclusive categories? And, does a lack of overt sensuality only mean passivity? My observations at the Khmer temples Prasat Kravan and Banteay Srei, and an encounter with an Indian tourist at Angkor Wat suggested responses to these questions and therefore also to Roveda's argument.

Prasat Kravan consists of five temples and the interior walls of two of these temples contain brick sculptures carved onto them. One of the temples features three separate female images on its three interior walls, and one of these images is identified as Lakshmi (See Figure 1). Owing to the curious combination of attributes in her hand, it is possible that this is instead a figure of Mahasakti, a manifestation of sacred feminine power and energy. As I stepped through the narrow doorway into the womb of the temple, I was confronted with the imposing image of this goddess. Bare-chested but with a long pleated skirt, she stood upright in the center of the wall, looking directly at those who entered the temple. In her two right hands, she held a trident (an attribute of Siva) and a wheel (an attribute of Vishnu). She is framed by an undulating floral arch. There was nothing to suggest diffidence or passivity in the manner of representation. Each of the three standing goddess images was flanked by a pair of kneeling devotees, their hands folded in a worshipful gesture. Despite the damaged state of these images, I could not help feeling dwarfed in their presence. Standing within the dark confines of the monument, I could well imagine a time when the flickering flames of oil lamps would have created a striking effect of these majestic images moving and emerging from the walls. Furthermore, the positioning of the kneeling attendants seemed to suggest that they visually engaged with each other, albeit out

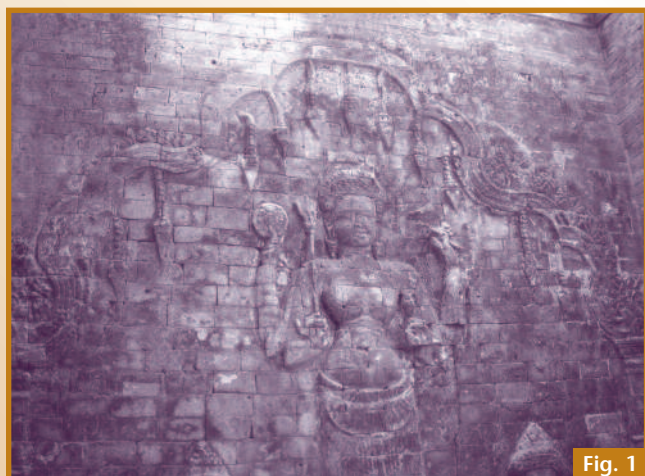


Fig. 1

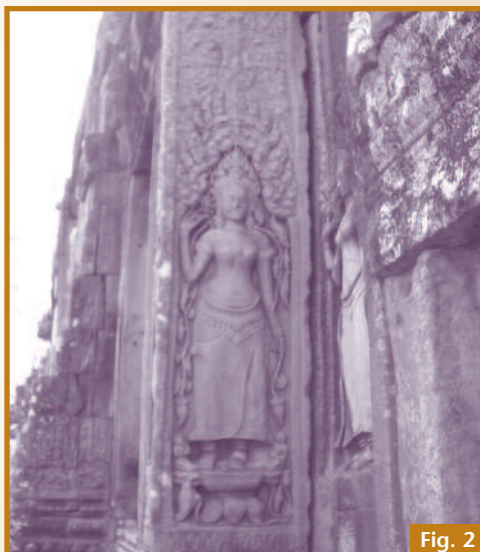


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

of the corner of their eyes. This particular arrangement created an impression of continuity between the three physically distinct goddess portrayals. It is tempting to think that the two images on the left and right walls were Lakshmi and Parvati while the central one was a fusion of the two, namely Mahasakti. Nevertheless, everything in the posture, scale, and rendition of these images, particularly in relation to the viewer suggested that the goddesses at Prasat Kravan were anything but submissive or powerless.

The not-so accidental views of a tourist

A cursory look at the Khmer female form would appear to support Roveda's point regarding the portrayal (or lack thereof) of sensuality in Khmer female forms. The Khmer images (See Figure 2) do not have the pinched waist of the Chola female statuary (See Figure 3) that emphasizes their ample breasts and wide hips. However, pre-Angkorean art is often singled out for particular praise because of their portrayal of a fluid and dynamic sensuality, more akin to Indian models. But many of the later female forms do not have the typical *tribhanga* pose where the body is bent in three places like an 'S' shape. On one of my visits to Angkor Wat, I met an Indian tourist and we fell into a conversation about Indian influence on Khmer art. Looking at the *Apsara* images on the monument he sniffed, "They are not half as sensuous as the Indian goddesses!" I could relate to his reaction very well. In many schools and colleges as well as popular understanding in India, the whole of Southeast Asian culture is projected as little more than an extension of Indian culture and Southeast Asian art is defined by many Indian scholars as a poorer cousin of the vastly superior Indian art. Being an Indian myself I had also been exposed to the same views. I found myself in an interesting situation: here I was standing before arguably the grandest statements of Khmer art *and* being confronted with the stereotype.

Much as comparisons between Indian and Khmer artistic (and therefore cultural) traditions are useful in tracing some of the reference points of Khmer art, it is critical not to allow Indian influence to dictate the terms through which we understand all of Khmer art. For instance, a comparison between the female forms of the Cholas and the Khmer suggest that Khmer notions

on sexuality and power might have been expressed using local idioms which may not be easily apparent particularly within the context of a literal comparison. Many scholars have stressed the importance of the phenomenon termed "localization" (a term used by George Coedes and notable particularly in the work of Oliver Wolters, 1999) when describing the process by which foreign ideas (such as those from India) were transformed in Southeast Asia to suit the needs of the local culture. While talking about the bas-reliefs at Angkor Wat, Wolters suggests that foreign (Indian) elements retreated into the local culture and began to call attention to features of Khmer society. I suggest that Wolters' perspective is a meaningful tool to tackle the comparison between Chola and Khmer notions on sexuality and power. My experience in the field both in India and Cambodia also strongly suggested that one of the key questions to be answered in the Chola-Khmer dynamic was the importance of cultural and historical context in notions such as sensuality.

Banteay Srei

Wolters in the revised edition of his publication *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* revisits the relevance of gender studies in Southeast Asia. He says, "...gender studies can provide additional arrows in the historian's quiver. But the question for the historian—male or female alike—must be whether...light is shed on anything interesting" (Wolters 1999: 233). To this question by Wolters whom Stanley O'Connor (2001) has praised as a "man of prowess" in recognition of his outstanding academic achievements, it is only fitting the great goddess Durga provide a response, for Durga according to Hindu mythology is armed with all the weapons of the gods, including arrows. The goddess Durga was the ferocious consort of Siva, created by the gods who each provided her with a weapon to kill the buffalo-headed demon Mahisha. The moment of her majestic triumph over the demon is one of the most popular artistic depictions of this goddess both in India and elsewhere. An exemplary depiction of this scene in Khmer art is on a pediment of the exquisite 10th century Saivite temple Banteay Srei. This modest temple is built of pink sandstone and its almost

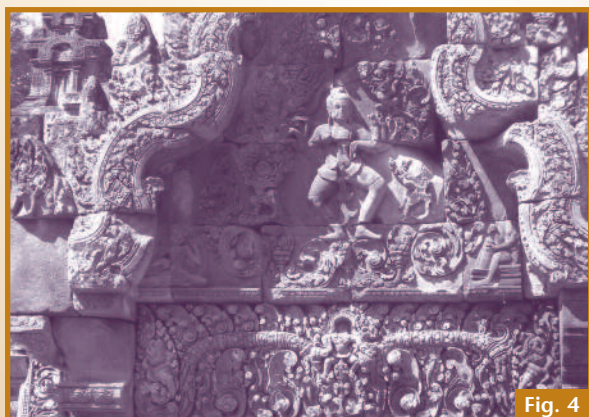


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

three-dimensional bas-reliefs are among the best in Khmer art. The western pediment of the East *gopura* features a vivid representation of the precise moment of victory when Mahisha meets his gory end at the hands of Durga. With her head tilted to one side, multiple arms raised, knees bent, legs splayed and skirts swaying with her movement, she is caught in mid-stride as she pins down the demon with her foot. As the demon lies bound by serpents at her feet, the goddess pierces him with a weapon. Durga is surrounded by swirling whorls and prancing lions as though enflamed by the energy radiating from the goddess's presence.

The greater significance of Durga however is perhaps in her relative location to the image of Dancing Siva. The vibrant sculptures of Dancing Siva and Durga are located on two faces (east and west) of the East *gopura*, like two sides of the same coin. As I stepped into the temple complex my eyes were immediately drawn to the beautiful image of Dancing Siva, on the eastern pediment (See Figures 4, 5). With his multiple outstretched hands displaying the various *mudra* or symbolic gestures of the dance, Siva is poised in transition with his body bent low, feet spread outward and knees splayed. His eyes are half-closed and lips upturned in a gentle yet confident smile. The dynamic quality of this scene is also captured in Siva's swaying sash and the raised arm of the musician in the right corner as though he is about to strike his drum. Like Durga, Siva is also framed by the churning whorls and prancing lions. Close to his feet on the left sits the South Indian Saivite saint Karaikalammaiyar, her mouth open as though in awe of her lord's performance. In many ways the representation of Durga and Siva mirror each other: the animated postures, multiple raised hands and the distribution of other figures around the central image. Therefore the relative location of the powerful, multi-armed Durga image on Banteay Srei suggests that the presence of the female divine in Khmer art was not only compelling but also in balanced complementarity with male gods. Studies on Khmer art often contain privileged depictions of male gods and deities while relegating the feminine aspects as peripheral, irrelevant or submissive. The example from Banteay Srei indicates that the time has come to critically re-examine the significance of the divine feminine in Khmer art and culture.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ According to Hermann Kulke (1990) the effort to master the rhetoric of Sanskrit terms while writing inscriptions and the Chinese translation of their sources into their understanding of a centralized state may have initially led to characterizing early Southeast Asian "states" as imperial kingdoms. These early characterizations were unquestioningly repeated by later scholars, especially certain French colonial and Indian writers. Oliver Wolters (1999) challenged the use of Westernized and Sinicized definitions such as "state" and "kingdom" for reconstructing early Southeast Asian history, preferring instead to use more neutral terms like "political systems" which would better define the transition from prehistory to protohistory, especially in Cambodia.
 - ² Hinduism has a multitude of gods but the three most powerful and significant among them are Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver) and Siva (the Destroyer). Their consorts are Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati/Sakti respectively.
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FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Recent findings about South Indian temples point to the fruitfulness of reexamining the role of goddesses in Khmer temples using novel techniques. For instance, a study by Padma Kaimal (2005) on the 8th century South Indian Kailasanatha temple revealed how the surrounding wall could have functioned as a goddess temple that encircled the tiered temple dedicated to the male god. Her analysis questions long-held distinctions such as "center" and "periphery" and cultural assumptions which have limited our perceptions about the representation of the feminine in Indian art. Similar approaches will likely also be useful in understanding Khmer notions of the female divine. There is undoubtedly great benefit in adopting techniques and ideas developed by researchers who focus on South India and other areas besides Cambodia. Nonetheless, it is vital to remember that artistic interpretations are both culturally and historically context-dependent. Therefore while examining Khmer art and culture one must be sensitive to Khmer-specific localization.

Another promising venue of research is to examine the holistic expression and the interactions between the constituent elements, e.g., the Durga and Siva images on the Banteay Srei temple as two related facets of the same structure. The significance of these representations for Khmer culture during the Angkor period can only be understood if they are viewed in their totality.


An integrative approach that fuses visual and literary sources would encourage the leap beyond the boundaries of established scholarship. Using the methodology described above and a re-examination of original sources my research promises to examine the overlooked and misunderstood representation of the feminine divine in ancient Khmer art and culture. Empowered with the arrows that now strengthen the quiver, we can entice the goddess to emerge from hiding. 

FIGURE CAPTIONS FOR PAGES 29-30

- 1 Image of Lakshmi/Mahasakti at Prasat Kravan (10th century), Cambodia
- 2 An Apsara on the Bayon (12th century), Cambodia
- 3 A Chola goddess (10th century (?)), South India
- 4 The Dancing Siva, eastern pediment of central tower, Banteay Srei (10th century), Cambodia
- 5 On-site at Banteay Srei, Cambodia

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Martin Loicano, Ph.D. candidate in history, Negotiating Strategy:
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Andrew Johnson, Ph.D. candidate in anthropology, Rebuilding Lanna:
Consuming and Constructing the Past in Urban Northern Thailand

Jonathan McIntyre, Ph.D. candidate in anthropology,
The Vietnamese Traffic Injury Epidemic: An Ethnographic Strategy

Ivan Small, Ph.D. candidate in anthropology,
The Cultural Imaginaries of Remittance Economies

Rachel Dunn, Ph.D. candidate in biological and environmental
engineering, Integrated Water Management Model for the
Viability of Northern Thai Hill Tribe Communities

Dietrich Christian Lammerts, Ph.D. candidate in Asian religions,
Dhammasat Manuscripts, Written Law, and Buddhist
Legal Culture in Myanmar (Burma) c1100 - 1600 C.E.

FULBRIGHT GRANTS FOR RESEARCH AND ADVANCED STUDY ABROAD 2005-07

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Jane Ferguson, Ph.D. candidate
in anthropology, The National
Politics of Local Digital Media
in Mae Hong Son, Thailand

Jason Tran, Ph.D. candidate
in Asian languages and
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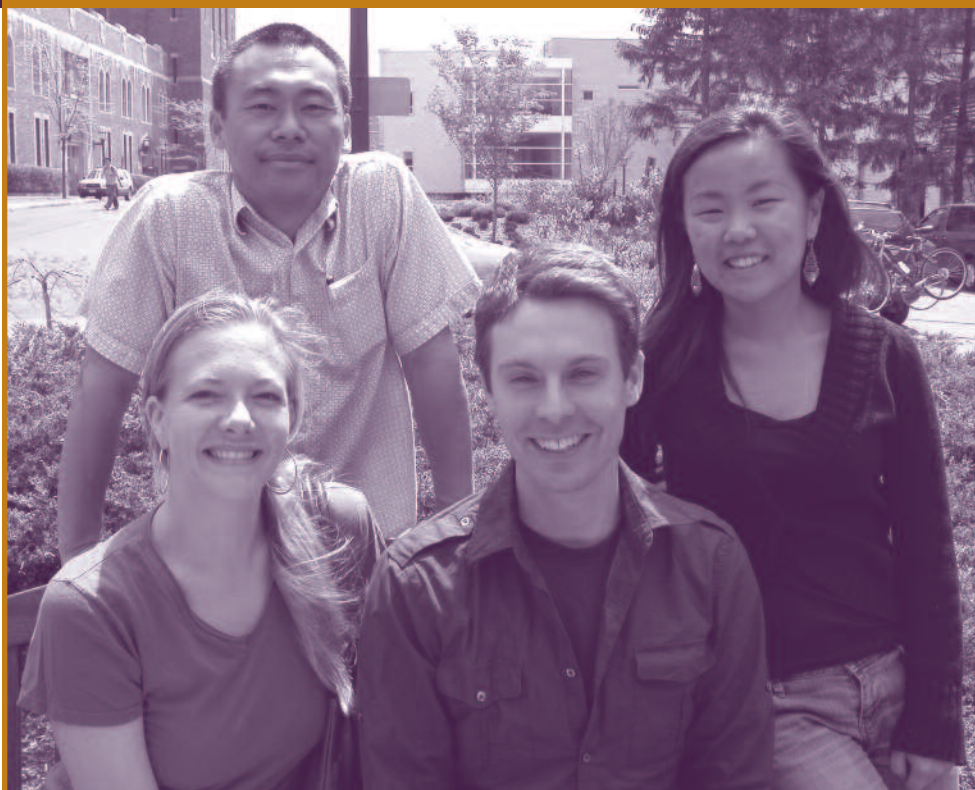


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LAURISTON SHARP PRIZE 2006

CONGRATULATIONS to **Alex Denes** (Ph.D. anthropology, May '06) who has been awarded the Lauriston Sharp Prize for 2006. Named after the founder of the Southeast Asia Program, this prize represents the highest honor given to the graduating student who has contributed the most to scholarship and to the community life of the program. According to her former advisor, Viranjini Munasinghe, Denes's dissertation *Recovering Khmer Ethnic Identity from the Thai National Past: An Ethnography of the Localism Movement in Surin Province* "is an exemplary work that combines a fine sense of historical analysis with deep ethnographic knowledge to render a fabulous and smart story about how nations relate to ethnics and vice-a-versa. The brilliance of Alex's rendition is that the complex theoretical points distill out of the story itself and we are spared from a painful separation between theory and the ethnographic illustration. Instead we are treated to different historical accounts and myths, and contemporary narratives of pageants and other state-sponsored regalia to understand why the once invisible Khmer are now being appropriated by the Thai national state." In addition to writing "a bold, well-conceptualized and beautifully rendered ethnography," Alex contributed to the life of SEAP in many ways. She was an active member of the SEAP Student Committee for many years, serving as co-chair in 2000-1. Her deep commitment and passion for Southeast Asian studies are aptly recognized by this award.

STUDENT COMMITTEE



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The full listing of Brown Bag Lectures can be found in the e-supplement to the Bulletin:
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SEAP OUTREACH NEWS

Thamora Fishel is the new Outreach Coordinator. Under her direction SEAP Outreach will be able to expand its post-secondary programming and professional development while strengthening its K-12 offerings. Thamora taught anthropology and courses on Southeast Asia at Franklin and Marshall College and California State University, Long Beach. She now lives in Trumansburg with her partner Jen and their one-year-old son Aiden. In addition to welcoming suggestions for the Bulletin and new ways to reach community colleges and other regional colleges and universities, Thamora hopes to enlist your help in collecting items for “explorer boxes” that are under development for Burma/Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. The Cambodia and Indonesia explorer boxes and curriculum are greatly appreciated by teachers and we would like to make material culture from a wider range of Southeast Asian countries available for teachers and students. A big thank-you to Jon and Mary Perry for the traditional toys they collected in Indonesia and to

Heather MacLachlan and Lorraine Pater-son for their efforts in securing the first items for the Burma/Myanmar box.

SEAP Outreach is also spearheading efforts to respond to the needs expressed by local teachers as they begin to work with students who are part of the growing population of Karen and Burmese refugee families in Ithaca, Utica, and other upstate communities. A workshop on Burma, the Karen and other borderland ethnic groups will be held at the Kahin Center on October 19 and 20, 2007. Watch the SEAP Outreach website for more details and the schedule of speakers.

We are also part of exciting collaborative programming with other area studies programs. Former SEAP Outreach Coordinator, Sophie Huntington has been appointed as the Educational

Outreach Coordinator for the Einaudi Center where she has helped establish Cornell Educational Resources on International Studies (CERIS) to coordinate these efforts. This past June SEAP visiting fellow Sarah Benson contributed to a workshop on Teaching World Cultures Through Art with a lovely presentation on northern Thai architecture titled “Living Thai Style.” In September we held a joint workshop titled Beyond Islam 101: Enhancing Your Curriculum. Upcoming International Studies Institutes for teachers include Global Responses to Climate Change (March 14, 2008), and Global Connections and U.S. Elections (July 14-15, 2008).



<http://einaudi.cornell.edu/southeastasia/outreach/>



Display Case Contest

Curate your own mini-exhibit in the Kahin Center

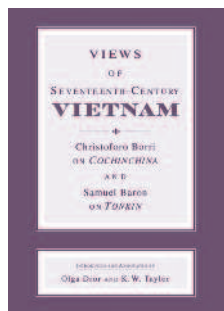
Perhaps you noticed the SEAquarium exhibit of accessories from Southeast Asia at the fall reception or during a trip to the Kahin Center for a brown bag talk. If not, be sure and take a closer look.

In order to encourage SEAP members to participate in creating new and stimulating exhibits in the Kahin Center display cases, SEAP Outreach is initiating an annual Display Case Contest. Winners will be announced at the SEAP banquet in the spring. (The prize is a gift certificate to Pangea.) Some displays might even be appropriate to go on tour to schools or other parts of campus to help raise the visibility of Southeast Asian Studies.

So pull out all of those items that you have gathered on trips to Southeast Asia and brainstorm with your friends and colleagues. Once your creative juices are flowing, have fun and organize your own display. Contact SEAP Outreach to propose and schedule your exhibit.

SEAP

Publications Announcements & News

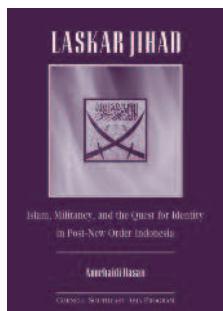


Views of Seventeenth-Century Vietnam: Christoforo Borri on Cochinchina and Samuel Baron on Tonkin

ed. and annot. Olga Dror and K. W. Taylor

This volume introduces two of the earliest writings about Vietnam to appear in the English language. The reports come from narrators with different interests who are viewing different parts of Vietnam at an early stage of European involvement in the region.

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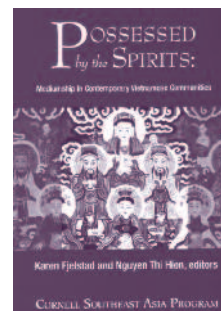
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